TALES OF MY LANDLORD,

Third Series.

Ahora bien, dixo el Cura, traedme, senor huésped, aquesos libros, que los quiero ver. Que me place, respondió el, y entrando, en su aposento, sacó dél una maletilla vieja cerrada con una cadenilla, y abriéndola, halló en ella tres libros grandes y unos papeles de muy buena letra escritos de mano.—DON QUIXOTE, Parte I. Capitulo 32.

It is mighty well, said the priest; pray, landlord, bring me those books, for I have a mind to see them. With all my heart, answered the host; and, going to his chamber, he brought out a little old cloke-bag, with a padlock and chain to it, and opening it, he took out three large volumes, and some manuscript papers written in a fine character.—JARVIS'S *Translation.*

Printed by James Ballantyne and Co.

TALES OF MY LANDLORD,

Third Series,

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED

BY

JEDEDIAH CLEISHBOTHAM,

SCHOOLMASTER AND PARISH-CLERK OF GANDERCLEUGH.

Hear, Land o' Cakes and brither Scots,
Frae Maidenkirk to Jonny Groats',
If there's a hole in a' your coats,
I rede ye tent it,
A chiel's amang you takin' notes,
An' faith he'll prent it.
BURNS.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR.

THE

BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR.

CHAPTER I.

As, to the Autumn breeze's bugle-sound,
Various and vague the dry leaves dance their round;
Or, from the garner-door, on æther borne,
The chaff flies devious from the winnow d corn;
So vague, so devious, at the breath of heaven,
From their fix'd aim are mortal counsels driv'n.

Anonymous.

We left Caleb Balderstone in the extremity of triumph at the success of his various atchievements for the honour of the house of Ravenswood. When he had mustered and marshalled his dishes of divers kinds, a more royal provision had not been seen in Wolf's Crag, since the funeral feast of its deceased lord. Great was the glory of the serving-man, as he *decored* the old oak-

en table with a clean cloth, and arranged upon it carbonadoed venison and roasted wild-fowl, with a glance, every now and then, as if to upbraid the incredulity of his master and his guests; and with many a story, more or less true, was Lockhard that evening regaled concerning the ancient grandeur of Wolf's Crag, and the sway of its Barons over the country in their neighbourhood.

"A vassal scarce held a calf or a lamb his ain, till he had first asked if the Lord of Ravenswood was pleased to accept it; and they were obliged to ask the lord's consent before they married in these days, and mony a merry tale they tell about that right as weel as others. And although," said Caleb, "these times are not like the gude auld times, when authority had its right, yet, true it is, Mr Lockhard, and you yoursell may partly have remarked, that we of the House of Ravenswood do our endeavour in keeping up, by all just and lawful exertion of our baronial authority,

that due and fitting connection betwixt superior and vassal, whilk is in some danger of falling into desuetude, owing to the general license and misrule of these present unhappy times."

"Umph!" said Mr Lockhard; "and if I may enquire, Mr Balderstone, pray do you find your people at the village yonder amenable? for I must needs say, that at Ravenswood Castle, now pertaining to my master, the Lord Keeper, ye have not left behind ye the most compliant set of tenantry."

"Ah! but Mr Lockhard," replied Caleb, "ye must consider there has been a change of hands, and the auld lord might expect twa turns frae them, when the new comer canna get ane. A dour and fractious set they were, thae tenants of Ravenswood, and ill to live wi' when they dinna ken their master—and if your master put them mad ance, the whole country will not put them down."

"Troth," said Mr Lockhard, "an such

be the case, I think the wisest thing for us a' wad be to hammer up a match between your young lord and our winsome young leddy up bye there; and Sir William might just stitch your auld barony to her gown-sleeve, and he wad sune cuitle another out o' somebody else, sic a lang head as he has."

Caleb shook his head.—" I wish," he said, " I wish that may answer, Mr Lockhard. There are auld prophecies about this house I wad like ill to see fulfilled wi' my auld e'en, that hae seen evil aneugh already."

" Pshaw! never mind freits," said his brother butler; " if the young folk liked ane anither, they wad make a winsome couple. But, to say truth, there is a leddy sits in our hall-nook, maun have her hand in that as weel as in every other job. But there's no harm in drinking to their healths, and I will fill Mrs Mysie a cup of Mr Girder's canary."

While they thus enjoyed themselves in the kitchen, the company in the hall were

not less pleasantly engaged. So soon as Ravenswood had determined upon giving the Lord Keeper such hospitality as he had to offer, he deemed it incumbent on him to assume the open and courteous brow of a well-pleased host. It has been often remarked, that when a man commences by acting a character, he frequently ends by adopting it in good earnest. In the course of an hour or two, Ravenswood, to his own surprise, found himself in the situation of one who frankly does his best to entertain welcome and honoured guests. How much of this change in his disposition was to be ascribed to the beauty and simplicity of Miss Ashton, to the readiness with which she accommodated herself to the inconveniences of her situation—how much to the smooth and plausible conversation of the Lord Keeper, remarkably gifted with those words which win the ear, must be left to the reader's ingenuity to conjecture. But Ravenswood was insensible to neither.

The Lord Keeper was a veteran statesman,

well acquainted with courts and cabinets, and intimate with all the various turns of public affairs during the last eventful years of the seventeenth century. He could talk, from his own knowledge, of men and events, in a way which failed not to win attention, and had the peculiar art, while he never said a word which committed himself, at the same time to persuade the hearer that he was speaking without the least shadow of scrupulous caution or reserve. Ravenswood, in spite of his prejudices and real grounds of resentment, felt himself at once amused and instructed in listening to him, while the statesman, whose inward feelings had at first so much impeded his first efforts to make himself known, had now regained all the ease and fluency of a silver-tongued lawyer of the very highest order.

His daughter did not speak much, but she smiled; and what she did say argued a submissive gentleness, and a desire to give pleasure, which, to a proud man like

Ravenswood, was more fascinating than the most brilliant wit. Above all, he could not but observe, that, whether from gratitude or from some other motive, he himself, in his deserted and unprovided hall, was as much the object of respectful attention to his guests, as he would have been when surrounded by all the appliances and means of hospitality proper to his high birth. All deficiencies passed unobserved, or, if they did not escape notice, it was to praise the substitutes which Caleb had contrived to supply the want of the usual accommodations. Where a smile was unavoidable, it was a very good-humoured one, and often coupled with some well-turned compliment, to shew how much the guests esteemed the merit of their noble host, how little they thought of the inconveniencies with which they were surrounded. I am not sure whether the pride of being found to outbalance, in virtue of his own personal merit, all the disadvantages of fortune, did not make as favourable an

impression upon the haughty heart of the Master of Ravenswood, as the conversation of the father and the beauty of Lucy Ashton.

The hour of repose arrived. The Keeper and his daughter retired to their apartments, which were "decored" more properly than could have been anticipated. In making the necessary arrangements, Mysie had indeed enjoyed the assistance of a gossip who had arrived from the village upon an exploratory expedition, but had been arrested by Caleb, and impressed into the domestic drudgery of the evening. So that, instead of returning home to describe the dress and person of the grand young lady, she found herself compelled to be active in the domestic economy of Wolf's Crag.

According to the custom of the time, the Master of Ravenswood attended the Lord Keeper to his apartment, followed by Caleb, who placed on the table, with all the ceremonials due to torches of wax, two

rudely framed tallow-candles, such as in those days were only used by the peasantry, hooped in paltry clasps of wire, which served for candlesticks. He then disappeared, and presently entered with two earthen flagons, (the china, he said, had been little used since my lady's time,) one filled with canary wine, the other with brandy. The canary sack, unheeding all probabilities of detection, he declared had been twenty years in the cellars of Wolf's Crag, "though it was not for him to speak before their honours; the brandy,—it was weel ken'd liquor, as mild as mead, and as strong as Sampson—it had been in the house ever since the memorable revel, in which auld Mickletob had been slain at the head of the stair by Jamie of Jenklebrae, on account of the honour of the worshipful Lady Muirend, wha was in some sort an ally of the family; natheless"——

"But to cut that matter short, Mr Caleb," said the Keeper, "perhaps you will favour me with a ewer of water."

"God forbid your lordship should drink water in this family, to the disgrace of so honourable an house!"

"Nevertheless, if his lordship have a fancy," said the Master, smiling, "I think you might indulge him; for, if I mistake not, there has been water drank here at no distant date, and with good relish too."

"To be sure, if his lordship has a fancy," said Caleb; and re-entering with a jug of pure element—"He will scarce find such water ony where as is drawn frae the well at Wolf's Crag—nevertheless"——

"Nevertheless, we must leave the Lord Keeper to his repose in this poor chamber of ours," said the Master of Ravenswood, interrupting his talkative domestic, who immediately turning to the door-way, with a profound reverence, prepared to usher his master from the secret chamber.

But the Lord Keeper prevented his host's departure.—"I have but one word to say to the Master of Ravenswood, Mr Caleb, and I fancy he will excuse your waiting."

With a second reverence, lower than the former, Caleb withdrew—and his master stood motionless, expecting, with considerable embarrassment, what was to close the events of a day fraught with unexpected incidents.

"Master of Ravenswood," said Sir William Ashton, with some embarrassment, "I hope you understand the Christian law too well to suffer the sun to set upon your anger?"

The Master blushed, and replied, "He had no occasion that evening to exercise the duty enjoined upon him by his Christian faith."

"I should have thought otherwise," said his guest, "considering the various subjects of dispute and litigation which have unhappily occurred more frequently than was desirable or necessary betwixt the late honourable lord, your father, and myself."

"I could wish, my lord," said Ravenswood, agitated by suppressed emotion, "that reference to these circumstances

should be made any where rather than under my father's roof."

"I should have felt the delicacy of this appeal at another time," said Sir William Ashton, "but now I must proceed with what I meant to say.—I have suffered too much in my own mind from the false delicacy which prevented my soliciting with earnestness, what indeed I frequently requested, a personal communing with your father—much distress of mind to him and to me might have been prevented."

"It is true," said Ravenswood, after a moment's reflection; "I have heard my father say your lordship had proposed a personal interview."

"Proposed, my dear Master? I did indeed propose it, but I ought to have begged, entreated, beseeched it. I ought to have torn away the veil which interested persons had stretched betwixt us, and shewn myself as I was, willing to sacrifice a considerable part even of my legal rights in order to conciliate feelings so natural as his

must be allowed to have been. Let me say for myself, my young friend, for so I will call you, that had your father and I spent the same time together which my good fortune has allowed me to-day to pass in your company, it is possible the land might yet have enjoyed one of the most respectable of its ancient nobility, and I should have been spared the pain of parting in enmity from a person whose general character I so much admired and honoured."

He put his handkerchief to his eyes. Ravenswood also was moved, but awaited in silence the progress of this extraordinary communication.

"It is necessary," continued the Lord Keeper, "and proper that you should understand, that there have been many points betwixt us, in which, although I judged it proper that there should be an exact ascertainment of my legal rights by the decree of a court of justice, yet it was never my intention to press them beyond the verge of equity."

"My lord," said the Master of Ravenswood, "it is unnecessary to pursue this topic farther. What the law will give you, or has given you, you enjoy—or you shall enjoy; neither my father, nor I myself, would have received any thing on the footing of favour."

"Favour?—no—you misunderstand me," resumed the Keeper; "or rather you are no lawyer. A right may be good in law, and ascertained to be so, which yet a man of honour may not in every case care to avail himself of."

"I am sorry for it, my lord," said the Master.

"Nay, nay," retorted his guest, "you speak like a young counsellor; your spirit goes before your wit. There are many things still open for decision betwixt us. Can you blame me, an old man desirous of peace, and in the castle of a young nobleman who has saved my daughter's life and my own, that I am desirous, anxiously

desirous, that these should be settled on the most liberal principle ?"

The old man kept fast hold of the Master's passive hand as he spoke, and made it impossible for him, be his predetermination what it would, to return any other than an acquiescent reply ; and wishing his guest good night, he postponed farther conference until the next morning.

Ravenswood hurried into the hall where he was to spend the night, and for a time traversed its pavement with a disordered and rapid pace. His mortal foe was under his roof, yet his sentiments towards him were neither those of a feudal enemy nor of a true Christian. He felt as if he could neither forgive him in the one character, or follow forth his vengeance in the other, but that he was making a base and dishonourable composition betwixt his resentment against the father and his affection for the daughter. He cursed himself, as he hurried to and fro in the pale moonlight, and more ruddy gleams of the expi-

ring wood-fire. He threw open and shut the latticed windows with violence, as if alike impatient of the admission and exclusion of free air. At length, however, the torrent of passion foamed off its madness, and he threw himself into the chair, which he proposed as his place of repose for the night.

"If, in reality,"—such were the calmer thoughts that followed the first tempest of his passion—"If, in reality, this man desires no more than the law allows him—if he is willing to adjust even his acknowledged rights upon an equitable footing, what could be my father's cause of complaint?—what is mine?—Those from whom we won our ancient possessions fell under the sword of my ancestors, and left lands and livings to the conquerors; we sink under the force of the law, now too powerful for the Scottish chivalry. Let us parley with the victors of the day, as if we had been besieged in our fortress and without hope of relief. This man may be other

than I have thought him; and his daughter—but I have resolved not to think upon her."

He wrapt his cloak around him, fell asleep, and dreamed of Lucy Ashton till day-light gleamed through the lattices.

CHAPTER II.

We worldly men, when we see friends and kinsmen
Past hope sunk in their fortunes, lend no hand
To lift them up, but rather set our feet
Upon their heads to press them to the bottom,
As I must yield with you I practised it;
But now I see you in a way to rise,
I can and will assist you.——

New Way to Pay Old Debts.

The Lord Keeper carried with him to a couch, harder than he was accustomed to stretch himself upon, the same ambitious thoughts and political perplexities, which drive sleep from the softest down that ever spread a bed of state. He had sailed long enough amid the contending tides and currents of the time to be sensible of their peril, and of the necessity of trimming his

vessel to the prevailing wind, if he would have her escape shipwreck in the storm. The nature of his talents, and the timorousness of disposition connected with them, had made him assume the pliability of the versatile old Earl of Northampton, who explained the art by which he kept his ground during all the changes of state, from the reign of Henry VIII. to that of Elizabeth, by the frank avowal, that he was born of the willow, not of the oak. It had accordingly been Sir William Ashton's policy on all occasions to watch the changes in the political horizon, and, ere yet the conflict was decided, to negociate some interest for himself with the party most likely to prove victorious. His time-serving disposition was well known, and excited the contempt of the more daring leaders of both factions in the state. But his talents were of a useful and practical kind, and his legal knowledge held in high estimation; and they so far counter-balanced other

deficiencies, that those in power were glad to use and to reward, though without trusting or respecting him.

The Marquis of A—— had used his utmost influence to effect a change in the Scottish cabinet, and his schemes had been of late so well laid and so ably supported, that there appeared a very great chance of his proving ultimately successful. He did not, however, feel so strong or so confident as to neglect any means of drawing recruits to his standard. The acquisition of the Lord Keeper was deemed of some importance, and a friend, perfectly acquainted with his circumstances and character, became responsible for his political conversion.

When this gentleman arrived at Ravenswood Castle upon a visit, the real purpose of which was disguised under general courtesy, he found the prevailing fear, which at present beset the Lord Keeper, was that of danger to his own person from the Master of Ravenswood. The language which the blind sybil, old Alice, had used; the sud-

den appearance of the Master armed, and within his precincts, immediately after he had been warned against danger from him; the cold and haughty return received in exchange for the acknowledgments with which he loaded him for his timely protection, had all made a strong impression on his imagination.

So soon as the Marquis's political agent found how the wind sate, he began to insinuate fears and doubts of another kind, scarce less calculated to affect the Lord Keeper. He enquired with seeming interest, whether the proceedings in Sir William's complicated litigation with the Ravenswood family was out of court, and settled without the possibility of appeal? The Lord Keeper answered in the affirmative; but his interrogator was too well informed to be imposed upon. He pointed out to him, by unanswerable arguments, that some of the most important points which had been decided in his favour against the House of Ravenswood, were liable to be

reviewed by the Estates of the Kingdom, *i. e.* by the Scottish Parliament, upon an appeal by the party injured, or, as it was technically termed, "a protestation for remeid in law."

The Lord Keeper, after he had for some time disputed the legality of such a proceeding, was compelled, at length, to comfort himself with the improbability of the young Master of Ravenswood finding friends in parliament, capable of stirring in so weighty an affair.

"Do not comfort yourself with that false hope," said his wily friend; "it is possible, that in the next session of parliament, young Ravenswood may find more friends and favour even than your lordship."

"That would be a sight worth seeing," said the Keeper scornfully.

"And yet," said his friend, "such things have been seen ere now, and in our own time. There are many at the head of affairs even now, that a few years ago were under hiding for their lives; and many a

man dining on plate of silver, that was fain to eat his crowdy without a bicker; and many a high head has been brought full low among us in as short a space. Scott of Scotstarvet's 'Staggering State of Scots Statesmen,' of which curious memoir you shewed me a manuscript, has been outstaggered in our time."

The Lord Keeper answered with a deep sigh, "that these mutations were no new sights in Scotland, and had been witnessed long before the time of the satirical author he had quoted. It was many a long year," he said, "since Fordun had quoted, as an ancient proverb, '*neque dives, neque fortis, sed nec sapiens Scotus, prædominante invidia, diu durabit in terra.*'"

"And be assured, my esteemed friend," was the answer, "that even your long services to the state, or deep legal knowledge, will not save you, or render your estate stable, if the Marquis of A—— comes in with a parliament according to his will.

You know that the deceased Lord Ravenswood was his near ally, his lady being fifth in descent from the Knight of Tillibardine; and I am well assured that he will take young Ravenswood by the hand, and be his very good lord and kinsman. Why should he not?—he is an active and stirring young fellow, able to help himself with tongue and hands; and it is such as he that find friends among their kindred, and not those unarmed and unable Mephebosheths, that are sure to be a burthen to every one that takes them up. And so, if these Ravenswood cases be called over the coals in parliament, you will find that the Marquis will have a crow to pluck with you."

"That would be an evil requital," said the Lord Keeper, "for my long services to the state, and the ancient respect in which I have held his lordship's honourable family and person."

"Aye, but," rejoined the agent of the Marquis, "it is in vain to look back on

past service and auld respect, my lord—it will be present service and immediate proofs of regard, which, in these sliddery times, will be expected by a man like the Marquis."

The Lord Keeper now saw the full drift of his friend's argument, but he was too cautious to return any positive answer.

"He knew not," he said, "the service which the Lord Marquis could expect from one of his limited abilities, that had not always stood at his command, still saving and reserving his duty to his king and country."

Having thus said nothing, while he seemed to say every thing, for the exception was calculated to cover whatever he might afterwards think proper to bring under it, Sir William Ashton changed the conversation, nor did he again permit it to be introduced. His guest departed, without having brought the wily old statesman the length of committing himself, or of pledging him-

self to any future line of conduct, but with the certainty that he had alarmed his fears in a most sensible point, and laid a foundation for future and farther treaty.

When he rendered an account of his negociation to the Marquis, they both agreed that the Keeper ought not to be permitted to relapse into security, and that he should be plied with new subjects of alarm, especially during the absence of his lady. They were well aware that her proud, vindictive, and predominating spirit, would be likely to supply him with the courage in which he was deficient—that she was immovably attached to the party now in power, with whom she maintained a close correspondence and alliance, and that she hated, without fearing, the Ravenswood family, whose more ancient dignity threw discredit on the newly acquired grandeur of her husband, to such a degree that she would have periled the interest of her own house, to have the prospect of altogether crushing that of her enemy.

But Lady Ashton was now absent. The business which had long detained her in Edinburgh, had afterwards induced her to travel to London, not without the hope that she might contribute her share to disconcert the intrigues of the Marquis at court, for she stood high in favour with the celebrated Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, to whom, in point of character, she bore considerable resemblance. It was necessary to press her husband hard before her return; and, as a preparatory step, the Marquis wrote to the Master of Ravenswood the letter which we rehearsed in a former chapter. It was cautiously worded, so as to leave it in the power of the writer hereafter to take as deep, or as slight an interest in the fortunes of his kinsman, as the progress of his own schemes might require. But however unwilling, as a statesman, the Marquis might be to commit himself, or assume the character of a patron, while he had nothing to give away, it must be said to his honour, that he felt

a strong inclination effectually to befriend the Master of Ravenswood, as well as to use his name as a means of alarming the terrors of the Lord Keeper.

As the messenger who carried this letter was to pass near the house of the Lord Keeper, he had it in direction, that in the village adjoining to the park-gate of the castle, his horse should lose a shoe, and that, while it was replaced by the smith of the place, he should express the utmost regret for the necessary loss of time, and in the vehemence of his impatience, give it to be understood, that he was bearing a message from the Marquis of A——— to the Master of Ravenswood, upon a matter of life and death.

This news, with exaggerations, was speedily carried from various quarters to the ears of the Lord Keeper, and each reporter dwelt upon the extreme impatience of the courier, and the surprising short time in which he had executed his journey. The anxious statesman heard in silence; but in

private Lockhard received orders to watch the courier on his return, to way-lay him in the village, to ply him with liquor if possible, and to use all means, fair or foul, to learn the contents of the letter of which he was the bearer. But as this plot had been foreseen, the messenger returned by a different and distant road, and thus escaped the snare that was laid for him.

After he had been in vain expected for some time, Mr Dingwall had orders to make especial enquiry among his clients of Wolf's-hope, whether such a domestic belonging to the Marquis of A—— had actually arrived at the neighbouring castle. This was easily ascertained; for Caleb had been in the village one morning by five o'clock, to borrow "twa chappins of ale and a kipper" for the messenger's refreshment, and the poor fellow had been ill for twenty-four hours at Luckie Sma'trash's, in consequence of dining upon "saut saumon and sour drink." So that the existence of a correspondence betwixt the Mar-

quis and his distressed kinsman, which Sir William Ashton had sometimes treated as a bug-bear, was proved beyond the possibility of further doubt.

The alarm of the Lord Keeper became very serious. Since the Claim of Right, the power of appealing from the decisions of the civil court to the estates of parliament, which had formerly been held incompetent, had in many instances been claimed, and in some allowed, and he had no small reason to apprehend the issue, if the Scottish parliament should be disposed to act upon the protestation of the Master of Ravenswood "for remeid in law." It would resolve into an equitable claim, and be decided, perhaps, upon the broad principles of justice, which were not quite so favourable to the Lord Keeper as those of strict law. Meanwhile, every report which reached him served to render the success of the Marquis's intrigues the more probable, and the Lord Keeper began to think it indispensible, that he should look

round for some kind of protection against the coming storm. The timidity of his temper induced him to adopt measures of compromise and conciliation. The affair of the wild bull, properly managed, might, he thought, be made to facilitate a personal communication and reconciliation betwixt the Master and himself. He would then learn, if possible, what his own ideas were of the extent of his rights, and the means of enforcing them; and perhaps matters might be brought to a compromise, where one party was wealthy, and the other so very poor. A reconciliation with Ravens wood was likely to give him an opportunity to play his own game with the Marquis of A——. "And besides," said he to himself, "it will be an act of generosity to raise up the heir of this distressed family; and if he is to be warmly and effectually befriended by the new government, who knows but my virtue may prove its own reward?"

Thus thought Sir William Ashton, co-

vering with no unusual self-delusion his interested views with a hue of virtue; and having attained this point, his fancy strayed still farther. He began to bethink himself, "that if Ravenswood was to have a distinguished place of power and trust—and if such a union would sopite the heavier part of his unadjusted claims—there might be worse matches for his daughter Lucy—the Master might be reponed against the attainder—Lord Ravenswood was an ancient title, and the alliance would, in some measure, legitimate his own possession of the greater part of the Master's spoils, and make the surrender of the rest a subject of less bitter regret."

With these mingled and multifarious plans occupying his head, the Lord Keeper availed himself of my Lord Bittlebrains' repeated invitation to his residence, and thus came within a very few miles of Wolf's Crag. Here he found the lord of the mansion absent, but was courteously received by the lady, who expected her husband's immedi-

ate return. She expressed her particular delight at seeing Miss Ashton, and appointed the hounds to be taken out for the Lord Keeper's special amusement. He readily entered into the proposal, as giving him an opportunity to reconnoitre Wolf's Crag, and perhaps to make some acquaintance with the owner, if he should be tempted from his desolate mansion by the chase. Lockhard had his orders to endeavour on his part to make some acquaintance with the inmates of the castle, and we have seen how he played his part.

The accidental storm did more to further the Lord Keeper's plan of forming a personal acquaintance with young Ravenswood, than his most sanguine expectations could have anticipated. His fear of the young nobleman's personal resentment had greatly decreased, since he considered him as formidable from his legal claims, and the means he might have of enforcing them. But although he thought, not unreasonably, that only desperate circum-

stances drove men on desperate measures, it was not without a secret terror, which shook his heart within him, that he first felt himself enclosed within the desolate tower of Wolf's Crag; a place so well fitted, from solitude and strength, to be a scene of violence and vengeance. The stern reception at first given to them by the Master of Ravenswood, and the difficulty he felt in explaining to that injured nobleman what guests were under the shelter of his roof, did not sooth these alarms; so that when Sir William Ashton heard the door of the court-yard shut behind him with violence, the words of Alice rung in his ears, "that he had drawn on matters too hardly with so fierce a race as those of Ravenswood, and that they would bide their time to be avenged."

The subsequent frankness of the Master's hospitality, as their acquaintance increased, abated the apprehensions these recollections were calculated to excite; and it did not escape Sir William Ashton, that

it was to Lucy's grace and beauty, he owed the change in their host's behaviour.

All these thoughts thronged upon him when he took possession of the secret chamber. The iron lamp, the unfurnished apartment, more resembling a prison than a place of ordinary repose, the hoarse and ceaseless sound of the waves rushing against the base of the rock on which the castle was founded, saddened and perplexed his mind. To his own successful machinations, the ruin of the family had been in a great measure owing, but his disposition was crafty and not cruel; so that actually to witness the desolation and distress he had himself occasioned, was as painful to him as it would be to the humane mistress of a family to superintend in person the execution of the lambs and poultry which are killed by her own directions. At the same time, when he thought of the alternative, of restoring to Ravenswood a large proportion of his spoils, or of adopting, as an ally and member of his own family, the heir of

this impoverished house, he felt as the spider may be supposed to do, when his whole web, the intricacies of which had been planned with so much art, is destroyed by the chance sweep of a broom. And then, if he should commit himself too far in this matter, it gave rise to a perilous question, which many a good husband, when under temptation to act as a free agent, has asked himself without being able to return a satisfactory answer; "What will my wife—what will Lady Ashton say?" On the whole, he came at length to the resolution in which minds of a weaker cast so often take refuge. He resolved to watch events, to take advantage of circumstances as they occurred, and regulate his conduct accordingly. In this spirit of temporizing policy, he at length composed his mind to rest.

CHAPTER II.

"A slight note I have about me for you, for the delivery of which you must excuse me. It is an offer that friendship calls upon me to do, and no way offensive to you, since I desire nothing but right upon both sides."

King and no King.

When Ravenswood and his guest met in the morning, the gloom of the Master's spirit had in part returned. He, also, had passed a night rather of reflection than of slumber; and the feelings which he could not but entertain towards Lucy Ashton, had to support a severe conflict against those which he had so long nourished against her father. To clasp in friendship the hand of the enemy of his house, to entertain him under his roof, to exchange with him the courtesies and the kindness

of domestic familiarity, was a degradation which his proud spirit could not be bent to without a struggle.

But the ice being once broken, the Lord Keeper was resolved it should not have time again to freeze. It had been part of his plan to stun and confuse Ravenswood's ideas, by a complicated and technical statement of the matters which had been in debate betwixt their families, justly thinking it would be difficult for a youth of his age to follow the expositions of a practical lawyer, concerning actions of compt and reckoning, and of multiplepoindings, and adjudication and wadsets, proper and improper, and poindings of the ground and declarations of expiry of the legal. Thus, thought Sir William, I shall have all the grace of appearing perfectly communicative, while my party will derive very little advantage from any thing I may tell him. He therefore took Ravenswood aside into the deep recess of a window in the hall, and resuming the dis-

course of the preceding evening, expressed a hope that his young friend would assume some patience, in order to hear him enter into a minute and explanatory detail of those unfortunate circumstances, in which his late honourable father had stood at variance with the Lord Keeper. The Master of Ravenswood coloured highly, but was silent; and the Lord Keeper, though not greatly approving the sudden height ening of his auditor's complexion, commenced the history of a bond for twenty thousand marks, advanced by his father to the father of Allan Lord Ravenswood, and was proceeding to detail the executorial proceedings by which this large sum had been rendered a *debitum fundi*, when he was interrupted by the Master.

"It is not in this place," he said, "that I can hear Sir William Ashton's explanation of the matters in question between us. It is not here, where my father died of a broken heart, that I can with decency

or temper investigate the cause of his distress. I might remember that I was a son, and forget the duties of a host. A time, however, there must come, when these things shall be discussed in a place and in a presence where both of us will have equal freedom to speak and to hear."

"Any time," the Lord Keeper said, "any place was alike to those who sought nothing but justice. Yet it would seem he was, in fairness, entitled to some premonition respecting the grounds upon which the Master proposed to impugn the whole train of legal proceedings, which had been so well and ripely advised in the only courts competent."

"Sir William Ashton," answered the Master with warmth, "the lands which you now occupy were granted to my remote ancestor for services done with his sword against the English invaders. How they have glided from us by a train of proceedings that seem to be neither sale, nor

mortgage, nor adjudication for debt, but a non-descript and entangled mixture of all these rights—how annual-rent has been accumulated upon principal, and no nook or coign of legal advantage left unoccupied, until our interest in our hereditary property seems to have melted away like an icicle in thaw—all this you understand better than I do. I am willing, however, to suppose, from the frankness of your conduct towards me, that I may in a great measure have mistaken your character, and that things may have appeared right and fitting to you, a skilful and practised lawyer, which to my ignorant understanding seem very little short of injustice and gross oppression."

"And you, my dear Master," answered Sir William, "you, permit me to say, have been equally misrepresented to me. I was taught to believe you a fierce, imperious, hot-headed youth, ready, at the slightest provocation, to throw your sword into the

scales of justice, and to appeal to those rude and forcible measures from which civil polity has long protected the people of Scotland. Then, since we were mutually mistaken in each other, why should not the young nobleman be willing to listen to the old lawyer, while, at least, he explains the points of difference betwixt them ?"

"No, my lord," answered Ravenswood; "it is in the Estates of the nation, in the supreme Court of Parliament, that we must parley together. The belted lords and knights of Scotland, her ancient peers and baronage, must decide, if it is their will that a house, not the least noble of their members, shall be stripped of their possessions, the reward of the patriotism of generations, as the pawn of a wretched mechanic becomes forfeit to the usurer the instant the hour of redemption has passed away. If they yield to the grasping severity of the creditor, and to the gnawing usury that eats into our lands as moths into raiment,

it will be of more evil consequence to them and their posterity than to Norman Ravenswood—I shall still have my sword and my cloak, and can follow the profession of arms wherever a trumpet shall sound."

As he pronounced these words, in a firm yet melancholy tone, he raised his eyes, and suddenly encountered those of Lucy Ashton, who had stolen unawares on their interview, and observed her looks fastened on them with an expression of enthusiastic interest and admiration, which had rapt her for the moment beyond the fear of discovery. The noble form and fine features of Ravenswood, fired with the pride of birth and sense of internal dignity—the mellow and expressive tones of his voice, the desolate state of his fortunes, and the indifference with which he seemed to endure and to dare the worst that might befall, rendered him a dangerous object of contemplation for a maiden already too much disposed to dwell upon recollections connected with

him. When their eyes encountered each other, both blushed deeply, conscious of some strong internal emotion, and shunned again to meet each other's look.

Sir William Ashton had, of course, closely watched the expression of their countenances. "I need fear," thought he to himself, "neither Parliament nor protestation; I have an effectual mode of reconciling myself with this hot-tempered young fellow, in case he shall become formidable. The present object is, at all events, to avoid committing ourselves. The hook is fixed; we will not strain the line too soon—it is as well to reserve the privilege of slipping it loose, if we do not find the fish worth landing."

In this selfish and cruel calculation upon the supposed attachment of Ravenswood to Lucy, he was so far from considering the pain he might give to the former, by thus dallying with his affections, that he did not even think upon the risk of involving his

own daughter in the perils of an unfortunate passion; as if her predilection, which could not escape his attention, were like the flame of a taper, which might be lighted or extinguished at pleasure. But Providence had prepared a dreadful requital for this keen observer of human passions, who had spent his life in securing advantages to himself by artfully working upon the passions of others.

Caleb Balderstone now came to announce that breakfast was prepared; for in those days of substantial feeding, the reliques of the supper amply furnished forth the morning meal. Neither did he forget to present to the Lord Keeper, with great reverence, a morning-draught in a large pewter cup, garnished with leaves of parsley and scurvy-grass. He craved pardon, of course, for having omitted to serve it in the great silver standing cup as behoved, being that it was at present in a silversmith's in Edinburgh, for the purpose of being overlaid with gilt.

"In Edinburgh sure enough," said Ravenswood; "but in what place, or for what purpose, I am afraid neither you nor I know."

"Aweel!" said Caleb peevishly, "there's a man standing at the gate already this morning—that's ae thing that I ken—Does your honour ken whether ye will speak wi' him or no?"

"Does he wish to speak with me, Caleb?"

"Less will no serve him," said Caleb; "but ye had best take a visie of him through the wicket before opening the gate—its no every ane we suld let into this castle."

"What! do you suppose him to be a messenger come to arrest me for debt?" said Ravenswood.

"A messenger arrest your honour for debt, and in your Castle of Wolf's Crag!—Your honour is jeasting wi' auld Caleb this morning." However, he whispered in his ear as he followed him out, "I would be

loth to do ony decent man a prejudice in your honour's gude opinion; but I wad take twa looks of that chield before I let him within these walls."

He was not an officer of the law, however; being no less a person than Captain Craigengelt, with his nose as red as a comfortable cup of brandy could make it, his laced cocked-hat set a little aside upon the top of his black riding periwig, a sword by his side, and pistols at his holsters, and his person arrayed in a riding suit, laid over with tarnished lace,—the very moral of one who would say, Stand, to a true man.

When the Master had recognized him, he ordered the gates to be opened. "I suppose," he said, "Captain Craigengelt, there are no such weighty matters betwixt you and me, but what may be discussed in this place. I have company in the castle at present, and the terms upon which we last parted must excuse my asking you to make part of them."

Craigengelt, although possessing the very perfection of impudence, was somewhat abashed by this unfavourable reception. "He had no intention," he said, "to force himself upon the Master of Ravenswood's hospitality—he was in the honourable service of bearing a message to him from a friend, otherwise the Master of Ravenswood should not have had reason to complain of this intrusion."

"Let it be short, sir," said the Master, "for that will be the best apology. Who is the gentleman who is so fortunate as to have your services as a messenger?"

"My friend Mr Hayston of Bucklaw," answered Craigengelt, with conscious importance, and that confidence which the acknowledged courage of his principal inspired, "who conceives himself to have been treated by you with something much short of the respect which he had reason to demand, and therefore is resolved to exact satisfaction. I bring with me," said he, taking a piece of paper out of his pocket,

"the precise length of his sword; and he requests you will meet him, accompanied by a friend, and equally armed, at any place within a mile of the castle, when I shall give attendance as umpire or second on his behoof."

"Satisfaction—and equal arms!" repeated Ravenswood, who, the reader will recollect, had no reason to suppose he had given the slightest offence to his late inmate—"upon my word, Captain Craigengelt, either you have invented the most improbable falsehood that ever came into the mind of such a person, or your morning-draught has been somewhat of the strongest. What could persuade Bucklaw to send me such a message?"

"For that, sir," replied Craigengelt, "I am desired to refer you to what, in duty to my friend, I am to term your inhospitality in excluding him from your house, without reasons assigned."

"It is impossible," replied the Master; "he cannot be such a fool as to interpret

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actual necessity as an insult. Nor do I believe, that, knowing my opinion of you, captain, he would have employed the services of so slight and inconsiderable a person as yourself upon such an errand, as I certainly could expect no man of honour to act with you in the office of umpire."

"I slight and inconsiderable!" said Craigengelt, raising his voice, and laying his hand on his cutlass; "if it were not that the quarrel of my friend craves the precedence, and is in dependence before my own, I would give you to understand"——

"I can understand nothing upon your explanation, Captain Craigengelt. Be satisfied of that, and oblige me with your departure."

"D——n!" muttered the bully; "and is this the answer which I am to carry back to an honourable message?"

"Tell the Laird of Bucklaw," answered Ravenswood, "if you are really sent by him, that when he sends me his cause of

grievance by a person fitting to carry such an errand betwixt him and me, I will either explain it or maintain it."

"Then, Master, you will at least cause to be returned to Hayston, by my hands, his property which is remaining in your possession."

"Whatever property Bucklaw may have left behind him, sir," replied the Master, "shall be returned to him by my servant, as you do not shew me any credentials from him which entitle you to receive it."

"Well, Master," said Captain Craigengelt, with malice which even his fear of the consequences could not suppress; "you have this morning done me an egregious wrong and dishonour, but far more to yourself. A castle indeed?" he continued, looking around him; "why this is worse than a *coupe gorge* house, where they receive travellers to plunder them of their property."

"You insolent rascal," said the Master,

raising his cane, and making a grasp at the captain's bridle, "if you do not depart without uttering another syllable, I will batoon you to death."

At the motion of the Master towards him, the bully turned so sharply round, that with some difficulty he escaped throwing down his horse, whose hoofs struck fire from the rocky pavement in every direction. Recovering him, however, with the bridle, he pushed for the gate, and rode sharply back again in the direction of the village.

As Ravenswood turned round to leave the court-yard after this dialogue, he found that the Lord Keeper had descended from the hall, and witnessed, though at the distance prescribed by politeness, his interview with Craigengelt.

"I have seen," said the Lord Keeper, "that gentleman's face, and at no great distance of time—his name is Craig—Craig—something, is it not?"

"Craigengelt is the fellow's name," said

the Master, "at least that by which he passes at present."

"Craig-in-guilt," said Caleb, punning upon the word *craig*, which in Scotch signifies throat; "if he is Craig-in-guilt just now, he is as likely to be Craig-in-peril as ony chield I ever saw—the loon has woodie written on his very visnomy, and I wad wager twa and a plack that hemp plaits his cravat yet."

"You understand physiognomy, good Mr Caleb," said the Keeper, smiling; "I assure you the gentleman has been near such a consummation before now—for I most distinctly recollect, that, upon occasion of a journey which I made about a fortnight ago to Edinburgh, I saw Mr Craigengelt, or whatever is his name, undergo a severe examination before the Privy Council."

"Upon what account?" said the Master of Ravenswood, with some interest.

The question led immediately to a tale which the Lord Keeper had been very

anxious to introduce, when he could find a graceful and fitting opportunity. He took hold of the Master's arm, and led him back towards the hall. "The answer to your question," he said, "though it is a ridiculous business, is only fit for your own ear."

As they entered the hall, he again took the Master apart into one of the recesses of the window, where it will be easily believed that Miss Ashton did not venture again to intrude upon their conference.

CHAPTER III.

——— Here is a father now,
Will truck his daughter for a foreign venture,
Make her the stop-gap to some cankered feud,
Or fling her o'er, like Jonah, to the fishes,
To appease the sea at highest.

Anonymous.

The Lord Keeper opened his communication with an appearance of unconcern, marking, however, very carefully, the effect of his communication upon young Ravenswood.

"You are aware," he said, "my young friend, that suspicion is the natural vice of our unsettled times, and exposes the best and wisest of us to the imposition of artful rascals. If I had been disposed to listen to such the other day, or even if I had

been the wily politician which you have been taught to believe me, you, Master of Ravenswood, instead of being at freedom, and with full liberty to solicit and act against me as you please, in defence of what you suppose to be your rights, would have been in the Castle of Edinburgh, or some other state prison; or, if you had escaped that destiny, it must have been by flight to a foreign country, and at the risk of a sentence of fugitation."

"My Lord Keeper," said the Master, "I think you would not jest on such a subject—yet it seems impossible you can be in earnest."

"Innocence," said the Lord Keeper, "is also confident, and sometimes, though very excusably, presumptuously so."

"I do not understand," said Ravenswood, "how a consciousness of innocence can be, in any case, accounted presumptuous."

"Imprudent, at least, it may be called," said Sir William Ashton, "since it is apt

to lead us into the mistake of supposing that sufficiently evident to others, of which, in fact, we are only conscious ourselves. I have known a rogue, for this very reason, make a better defence than an innocent man could have done in the same circumstances of suspicion. Having no consciousness of innocence to support him, such a fellow applies himself to all the advantages which the law will afford him, and sometimes (if his counsel be men of talent,) succeeds in compelling his judges to receive him as innocent. I remember the celebrated case of Sir Coolie Condiddle of Condiddle, who was tried for theft under trust, of which all the world knew him guilty, and yet was not only acquitted, but lived to sit in judgment on honester folks."

"Allow me to beg you will return to the point," said the Master; "you seemed to say that I had suffered under some suspicion."

"Suspicion, Master?—ay, truly—and I can shew you the proofs of it; if I happen

only to have them with me.—Here, Lockhard"—His attendant came—"Fetch me the little private mail with the padlocks, that I recommended to your particular charge—d'ye hear?"

"Yes, my lord." Lockhard vanished; and the Keeper continued as if half speaking to himself.

"I think the papers are with me—I think so, for as I was to be in this country, it was natural for me to bring them with me. I have them, however, at Ravenswood Castle, that I am sure of—so perhaps you might condescend"——

Here Lockhard entered, and put the leathern scrutoire, or mail-box, into his hands. The Keeper produced one or two papers, respecting the information laid before the Privy Council, concerning the riot, as it was termed, at the funeral of Allan Lord Ravenswood, and the active share he had himself taken in quashing the proceedings against the Master. These documents had been selected with care, so

as to irritate the natural curiosity of Ravenswood upon such a subject, without gratifying it, yet to shew that Sir William Ashton had acted upon that trying occasion the part of an advocate and peacemaker betwixt him and the jealous authorities of the day. Having furnished his host with such subjects for examination, the Lord Keeper went to the breakfast-table, and entered into light conversation, addressed partly to old Caleb, whose resentment against the usurper of the Castle of Ravenswood began to be softened by his familiarity, and partly to his daughter.

After perusing these papers, the Master of Ravenswood remained for a minute or two with his hand pressed against his brow, in deep and profound meditation. He then again ran his eye hastily over the papers, as if desirous of discovering in them some deep purpose, or some mark of fabrication, which had escaped him at first perusal. Apparently the second reading con-

firmed the opinion which had pressed upon him at the first, for he started from the stone-bench on which he was sitting, and, going to the Lord Keeper, took his hand, and, strongly pressing it, asked his pardon repeatedly for the injustice he had done him, when it appeared he was experiencing, at his hands, the benefit of protection to his person, and vindication to his character.

The statesman received these acknowledgments at first with well-feigned surprise, and then with an affectation of frank cordiality. The tears began already to start from Lucy's blue eyes at viewing this unexpected and moving scene. To see the Master, late so haughty and reserved, and whom she had always supposed the injured person, supplicating her father for forgiveness, was a change at once surprising, flattering, and affecting.

"Dry your eyes, Lucy," said her father; "why should you weep, because your father, though a lawyer, is discovered to be

a fair and honourable man?—What have you to thank me for, my dear Master," he continued, addressing Ravenswood, "that you would not have done in my case? '*Suum cuique tribuito*,' was the Roman justice, and I learned it when I studied Justinian. Besides, have you not overpaid me a thousand times in saving the life of this dear child?"

"Yes," answered the Master, in all the remorse of self-accusation; "but the little service *I* did was an act of mere brutal instinct; *your* defence of my cause, when you knew how ill I thought of you, and how much I was disposed to be your enemy, was an act of generous, manly, and considerate wisdom."

"Pshaw!" said the Lord Keeper, "each of us acted in his own way; you as a gallant soldier, I as an upright judge and privy-councillor. We could not, perhaps, have changed parts—at least I should have made a very sorry *Tauridor*, and you, my good Master, though your cause is so ex-

cellent, might have pleaded it perhaps worse yourself, than I who acted for you before the council."

"My generous friend!" said Ravenswood; and with that brief word, which the Keeper had often lavished on him, but which he himself now pronounced for the first time, he gave to his feudal enemy the full confidence of an haughty but honourable heart. He had been remarked among his contemporaries for sense and acuteness, as well as for his reserved, pertinacious, and irascible character. His prepossessions accordingly, however obstinate, were of a nature to give way before love and gratitude; and the real charms of the daughter, joined to the supposed services of the father, cancelled in his memory the vows of vengeance which he had taken so deeply on the eve of his father's funeral. But they had been heard and registered in the book of fate.

Caleb was present at this extraordinary scene, and he could conceive no other reason for a proceeding so extraordinary than

an alliance betwixt the houses, and Ravenswood Castle assigned for the young lady's dowry. As for Lucy, when Ravenswood uttered the most passionate excuses for his ungrateful negligence, she could but smile through her tears, and, as she abandoned her hand to him, assure him, in broken accents, of the delight with which she beheld the complete reconciliation between her father and her deliverer. Even the statesman was moved and affected by the fiery, unreserved, and generous self-abandonment with which the Master of Ravenswood renounced his feudal enmity, and threw himself without hesitation upon his forgiveness. His eyes glistened as he looked upon a couple who were obviously becoming attached, and who seemed made for each other. He thought how high the proud and chivalrous character of Ravenswood might rise under many circumstances, in which *he* found himself "over-crowed," to use a phrase of Spencer, and kept under, by his brief pedigree, and timidity of disposition. Then his

daughter—his favourite child—his constant play-mate—seemed formed to live happy in a union with such a commanding spirit as Ravenswood; and even the fine, delicate, fragile form of Lucy Ashton seemed to require the support of the Master's muscular strength and masculine character. And it was not merely during a few minutes that Sir William Ashton looked upon their marriage as a probable and even desirable event, for a full hour intervened ere his imagination was crossed by recollection of the Master's poverty, and the certain displeasure of Lady Ashton. It is certain, that the very unusual flow of kindly feeling with which the Lord Keeper had been thus surprised, was one of the circumstances which gave much tacit encouragement to the attachment between the Master and his daughter, and led both the lovers distinctly to believe that it was a connection which would be most agreeable to him. He himself was supposed to have admitted this effect, when, long after

the catastrophe of their love, he used to warn his hearers against permitting their feelings to obtain an ascendancy over their judgment, and affirm that the greatest misfortune of his life was owing to a very temporary predominance of sensibility over self-interest. It must be owned, if such was the case, he was long and severely punished for an offence of very brief duration.

After some pause, the Lord Keeper resumed the conversation.—"In your surprise at finding me an honester man than you expected, you have lost your curiosity about this Craigengelt, my good Master; and yet your name was brought in in the course of that matter too."

"The scoundrel!" said Ravenswood; "my connection with him was of the most temporary nature possible; and yet I was very foolish to hold any communication with him at all.—What did he say of me?"

"Enough," said the Keeper, "to excite the very loyal terrors of some of our sages, who are for proceeding against men on

the mere grounds of suspicion or mercenary information—Some nonsense about your proposing to enter into the service of France, or of the Pretender, I don't recollect which, but which the Marquis of A——, one of your best friends, and another person, one of your worst and most interested enemies, could not, some how, be brought to listen to."

"I am obliged to my honourable friend—and yet"—shaking the Lord Keeper's hand—"and yet I am still more obliged to my honourable enemy."

"*Inimicus amicissimus*," said the Lord Keeper, returning the pressure; "but this gentleman—this Mr Haystoun of Bucklaw—I am afraid the poor young man—I heard the fellow mention his name—is under very bad guidance."

"He is old enough to govern himself," answered the Master.

"Old enough, perhaps, but scarce wise enough, if he has chosen this fellow for his *fidus Achates*. Why, he lodged an informa-

tion against him—that is, such a consequence might have ensued from his examination, had we not looked rather at the character of the witness than the tenor of his evidence."

"Mr Haystoun of Bucklaw," said the Master, "is, I believe, a most honourable man, and capable of nothing that is mean or disgraceful."

"Capable of much that is unreasonable though, that you must needs allow, Master. Death will soon put him in possession of a fair estate, if he hath it not already; old Lady Girnington—an excellent person, excepting that her inveterate ill-nature rendered her intolerable to the whole world—is probably dead by this time. Six heirs portioners have successively died to make her wealthy. I know the estates well; they march with my own—a noble property."

"I am glad of it," said Ravenswood, "and should be more so, were I confident that Bucklaw would change his company

and habits with his fortunes. This appearance of Craigengelt, acting in the capacity of his friend, is a most vile augury for his future respectability."

"He is a bird of evil omen, to be sure," said the Keeper, "and croaks of jail and gallows-tree.—But I see Mr Caleb grows impatient for our return to breakfast."

CHAPTER IV.

Sir, stay at home and take an old man's council;
Seek not to bask you by a stranger's hearth;
Our own blue smoke is warmer than their fire.
Domestic food is wholesome, though 'tis homely,
And foreign dainties poisonous, though tasteful.

The French Courtezan.

THE Master of Ravenswood took an opportunity to leave his guests to prepare for their departure, while he himself made the brief arrangements necessary previous to his absence from Wolf's Crag for a day or two. It was necessary to communicate with Caleb on this occasion, and he found that faithful servitor in his sooty and ruinous den, greatly delighted with the departure of their visitors, and computing how long, with good management, the provisions which had been unexpended might

furnish forth the Master's table. "He's nae belly-god, that's ae blessing; and Bucklaw's gane, that could have eaten a horse behind the saddle. Cresses or water-purpie, and a bit oat-cake, can serve the Master for breakfast as weel as Caleb. Than for dinner—there's no muckle left on the spule-bane; it will brander though—it will brander very weel."

His triumphant calculations were interrupted by the Master, who communicated to him, not without some hesitation, his purpose to ride with the Lord Keeper as far as Ravenswood Castle, and to remain there for a day or two."

"The mercy of Heaven forbid!" said the old serving-man, turning as pale as the table-cloth which he was folding up.

"And why, Caleb?" said his master, "why should the mercy of Heaven forbid my returning the Lord Keeper's visit?"

"Oh, sir!" replied Caleb—"O Mr Edgar! I am your servant, and it ill becomes me to speak—but I am an auld servant—

have served baith your father and goodsire, and mind to have seen Lord Randal, your great-grandfather—but that was when I was a bairn."

"And what of all this, Balderstone?" answered the Master; "what can it possibly have to do with my paying some ordinary civility to a neighbour?"

"O Mr Edgar,—that is, my lord!"—answered the Butler, "your ain conscience tells you it isna for your father's son to be neighbouring wi' the like o' him—it isna for the credit of the family. An he were ance come to terms, and to gi'e ye back your ain, e'en though you suld honour his house wi' your alliance, I suldna say na—for the young leddy is a winsome sweet creature—But keep your ain state wi' them—I ken the race o' them weel—they will think the mair o' ye."

"Why, now, you go farther than I do, Caleb," said the Master, drowning a certain degree of consciousness in a forced laugh; "you are for marrying me into a family

that you will not allow me to visit—how's this?—and you look as pale as death besides."

"O, sir," repeated Caleb again, "you would but laugh if I tauld it; but Thomas the Rhymer, whose tongue couldna be fause, spoke the word of your house that will e'en prove ower true if you go to Ravenswood this day—O that it should e'er have been fulfilled in my time!"

"And what is it, Caleb?" said Ravenswood, wishing to sooth the fears of his old servant.

Caleb replied, "he had never repeated the lines to living mortal—they were told to him by an auld priest that had been confessor to Lord Allan's father when the family were catholic. But mony a time," he said, "I hae soughed thae dark words ower to mysell, and, well-a-day! little did I think of their coming round this day."

"Truce with your nonsense, and let me hear the doggrel which has put it into your head," said the Master impatiently.

With a quivering voice, and a cheek pale with apprehension, Caleb faultered out the following lines :—

"When the last Laird of Ravenswood to Ravenswood
shall ride,
And wooe a dead maiden to be his bride,
He shall stable his steed in the Kelpie's flow,
And his name shall be lost for evermoe !"

"I know the Kelpie's flow well enough; I suppose, at least, you mean the quicksand betwixt this tower and Wolf's-hope; but why any man in his senses should stable a steed there"——

"O, never speer ony thing about that, sir—God forbid we should ken what the prophecy means—but just bide you at hame, and let the strangers ride to Ravenswood by themselves. We have done aneugh for them; and to do mair, would be mair against the credit of the family than in its favour."

"Well, Caleb," said the Master, "I give you the best possible credit for your good

advice on this occasion; but as I do not go to Ravenswood to seek a bride, dead or alive, I hope I shall chuse a better stable for my horse than the Kelpie's quick-sand, and especially as I have always had a particular dread of it since the patrole of dragoons were lost there ten years since. My father and I saw them from the tower struggling against the advancing tide, and they were lost long before any help could reach them."

"And they deserved it weel, the southern loons," said Caleb; "what had they ado capering on our sands, and hindering a wheen honest folk frae bringing on shore a drap brandy? I hae seen them that busy, that I wad hae fired the auld culverin, or the demisaker that's on the south bartizan at them, only I was feared they might burst in the ganging off."

Caleb's brain was now fully engaged with abuse of the English soldiery and excisemen, so that his master found no great difficulty in escaping from him and rejoin-

ing his guests. All was now ready for their departure; and one of the Lord Keeper's grooms having saddled the Master's steed, they mounted in the court-yard.

Caleb had, with much toil, opened the double doors of the outward gate, and thereat stationed himself, endeavouring, by the reverential, and, at the same time, consequential air which he assumed, to supply, by his own gaunt, wasted, and thin person, the absence of a whole baronial establishment of porters, warders, and liveried menials.

The Keeper returned his deep reverence with a cordial farewell, stooping at the same time from his horse, and sliding into the Butler's hand the remuneration, which in those days was always given by a departing guest to the domestics of the family where he had been entertained. Lucy smiled on the old man with her usual sweetness, bade him adieu, and deposited her guerdon with a grace of action, and a gentleness of accent, which could not have

failed to have won the faithful retainer's heart, but for Thomas the Rhymer, and the successful law-suit against his master. As it was, he might have adopted the language of the Duke, in *As you like it*—

"Thou wouldst have better pleased me with this deed,
If thou hadst told me of another father."——

Ravenswood was at the lady's bridle-rein, encouraging her timidity, and guiding her horse carefully down the rocky path which led to the moor, when one of the servants announced from the rear that Caleb was calling loudly after them, desiring to speak with his master. Ravenswood felt it would look singular to neglect this summons, although inwardly cursing Caleb for his impertinent officiousness; therefore he was compelled to relinquish to Mr Lockhard the agreeable duty in which he was engaged, and to ride back to the gate of the court-yard. Here he was beginning, somewhat peevishly, to ask Caleb the cause of his clamour, when the good

old man exclaimed, "Whisht, sir! whisht, and let me speak just ae word that I couldna say afore folk—there"—(putting into his lord's hand the money he had just received)—"there's three gowd pieces—and ye'll want siller up-bye yonder—but stay, whisht now!"—for the Master was beginning to exclaim against this transference—"never say a word, but just see to get them changed in the first town ye ride through, for they are bran new frae the mint, and kenspeckle a wee bit."

"You forget, Caleb," said his master, striving to force back the money on his servant, and extricate the bridle from his hold—"You forget that I have some gold pieces left of my own. Keep these to yourself, my old friend; and, once more, good day to you. I assure you I have plenty. You know you have managed that our living should cost us little or nothing."

"Aweel," said Caleb, "these will serve for you another time; but see ye hae aneugh, for, doubtless, for the credit of

the family, there maun be some civility to the servants, and ye maun hae something to mak a show with when they say, Master, will you bet a broad piece? Then ye maun tak out your purse, and say, I carena if I do; and tak care no to agree on the articles of the wager, and just put up your purse again, and"——

"This is intolerable, Caleb—I really must be gone."

"And you will go, then?" said Caleb, loosening his hold upon the Master's cloak, and changing his didactics into a pathetic and mournful tone—"And you *will* go, for a' I have told you about the prophecy, and the dead bride, and the Kelpie's quicksand?—Aweel! a wilful man maun hae his way—he that will to Cupar maun to Cupar. But pity of your life, sir, if ye be fowling or shooting in the Park—beware of drinking at the Mermaiden's well——He's gane! he's down the path, arrow-flight after her!—The head is as clean ta'en aff the Ravens-

wood family this day, as I wad chap the head aff a sybo!"

The old Butler looked long after his master, often clearing away the dew as it rose to his eyes, that he might, as long as possible, distinguish his stately form from those of the other horsemen. "Close to her bridle-rein—ay, close to her bridle-rein!—Wisely saith the holy man, 'By this also you may know that woman hath dominion over all men;'—and without this lass would not our ruin have been altogether fulfilled."

With an heart fraught with such sad auguries did Caleb return to his necessary duties at Wolf's Crag, so soon as he could no longer distinguish the object of his anxiety among the groupe of riders, which diminished in the distance.

In the mean time the party pursued their route joyfully. Having once taken his resolution, the Master of Ravenswood was not of a character to hesitate or pause upon

it He abandoned himself to the pleasure he felt in Miss Ashton's company, and displayed an assiduous gallantry, which approached as nearly to gaiety as the temper of his mind and state of his family permitted. The Lord Keeper was much struck with his depth of observation, and the unusual improvement which he had derived from his studies. Of these accomplishments Sir William Ashton's profession and habits of society rendered him an excellent judge; and he well knew how to appreciate a quality to which he himself was a total stranger, the brief and decided dauntlessness of the Master of Ravenswood's disposition, who seemed equally a stranger to doubt and to fear. In his heart the Lord Keeper rejoiced at having conciliated an adversary so formidable, while, with a mixture of pleasure and anxiety, he anticipated the great things his young companion might achieve, were the breath of court-favour to fill his sails.

"What could she desire," he thought, his mind always conjuring up opposition in the person of Lady Ashton to his now prevailing wish—"What could a woman desire in a match, more than the sopiting of a very dangerous claim, and the alliance of a son-in-law, noble, brave, well-gifted, and highly-connected—sure to float whenever the tide sets his way—strong, exactly where we are weak, in pedigree and in the temper of a swordsman?—Sure no reasonable woman would hesitate—But, alas!"—Here his argument was stopped by the consciousness that Lady Ashton was not always reasonable, in his sense of the word. "To prefer some clownish Merse laird to the gallant young nobleman, and to the secure possession of Ravenswood upon terms of easy compromise—it would be the act of a madwoman!"

Thus pondered the veteran politician, until they reached Bittlebrains House, where it had been previously settled they

were to dine and repose themselves, and prosecute their journey in the afternoon.

They were received with an excess of hospitality; and the most marked attention was offered to the Master of Ravenswood, in particular, by their noble entertainers. The truth was, that Lord Bittlebrains had obtained his peerage by a good deal of plausibility, an art of building up a character for wisdom upon a very trite style of common-place eloquence, a steady observation of the changes of the times, and the power of rendering certain political services to those who could best reward them. His lady and he not feeling quite easy under their new honours, to which use had not adapted their feelings, were very desirous to procure the fraternal countenance of those who were born denizens of the regions into which they had been exalted from a lower sphere. The extreme attentions which they paid to the Master of Ravenswood, had its usual effect

in exalting his importance in the eyes of the Lord Keeper, who, although he had a reasonable degree of contempt for Lord Bittlebrains' general parts, entertained a hi h opinion of the acuteness of his judgment in matters of self-interest.

"I wish Lady Ashton had seen this," was his internal reflection; "no man knows so well as Bittlebrains on which side his bread is buttered; and he fawns on the Master like a beggar's messan on a cook. And my lady, too, bringing forward her beetle-browed misses to skirl and play upon the virginals, as if she said, pick and chuse. They are no more comparable to Lucy than an owl is to a cygnet, and so they may carry their black brows to a farther market."

The entertainment being ended, our travellers, who had still to measure the longest part of their journey, resumed their horses; and after the Lord Keeper, the Master, and the domestics, had drunk *doch-an-dorroch*, or the stirrup-cup, in the li-

quors adapted to their various ranks, the cavalcade resumed its progress.

It was dark by the time they entered the avenue of Ravenswood Castle, a long straight line leading directly to the front of the house, flanked with huge elm-trees, which sighed to the night-wind, as if they compassionated the heir of their ancient proprietors, who now returned to their shades in the society, and almost in the retinue, of their new master. Some feelings of the same kind oppressed the mind of the Master himself. He gradually became silent, and dropped a little behind the lady, at whose bridle-rein he had hitherto waited with such devotion. He well recollected the period, when, at the same hour in the evening, he had accompanied his father, as that nobleman left, never again to return to it, the mansion from which he derived his name and title. The extensive front of the old castle, on which he remembered having often looked back, was then "as black as mourning weed.'

The same front now glanced with many lights, some throwing far forward into the night a fixed and stationary blaze, and others hurrying from one window to another, intimating the bustle and busy preparation preceding their arrival, which had been intimated by an avant-courier. The contrast pressed so strongly upon the Master's heart, as to awaken some of the sterner feelings with which he had been accustomed to regard the new lord of his paternal domain, and to impress his countenance with an air of severe gravity, when, alighted from his horse, he stood in the hall no longer his own, surrounded by the numerous menials of its present owner.

The Lord Keeper, when about to welcome him with the cordiality which their late intercourse seemed to render proper, became aware of the change, refrained from his purpose, and only intimated the ceremony of reception by a deep reverence to his guest, seeming thus delicately to share the feelings which predominated on his brow.

Two upper domestics, bearing each a huge pair of silver candlesticks, now marshalled the company into a large saloon or with-drawing room, where new alterations impressed upon Ravenswood the superior wealth of the present inhabitants of the castle. The mouldering tapestry, which, in his father's time, had half covered the walls of this stately apartment, and half streamed from them in tatters, had given place to a complete finishing of wainscot, the cornice of which, as well as the frames of the various compartments, were ornamented with festoons of flowers and with birds, which, though carved in oak, seemed, such was the art of the chisel, actually to swell their throats, and flutter their wings. Several old family portraits of armed heroes of the house of Ravenswood, together with a suit or two of old armour, and some military weapons, had given place to those of King William and Queen Mary, of Sir Thomas Hope and Lord Stair, two distinguished

Scottish lawyers. The pictures of the Lord Keeper's father and mother were also to be seen; the latter, sour, shrewish, and solemn, in her black hood and close pinners, with a book of devotion in her hand; the former, exhibiting beneath a black silk Geneva cowl, or scull-cap, which sate as close to the head as if it had been shaven, a pinched, peevish, puritanical set of features, terminating in a hungry, reddish, peaked beard, forming on the whole a countenance, in the expression of which the hypocrite seemed to contend with the miser and the knave. And it is to make room for such as these, thought Ravenswood, that my ancestors have been torn from the walls which they erected. He looked at them again, and, as he looked, the recollection of Lucy Ashton (for she had not entered the apartment with them) seemed less lively in his imagination. There were also two or three Dutch drolleries, as the pictures of Ostade and Teniers were then termed, with one good painting of the Italian

school. There was, besides, a noble full-length of the Lord Keeper in his robes of office, placed beside his lady in silk and ermine, a haughty beauty, bearing in her looks all the pride of the House of Douglas, from which she was descended. The painter, notwithstanding his skill, overcome by the reality, or, perhaps, from a suppressed sense of humour, had not been able to give the husband on the canvass that air of awful rule and right supremacy, which indicates the full possession of domestic authority. It was obvious, at the first glance, that, despite mace and gold frogs, the Lord Keeper was somewhat hen-pecked. The floor of this fine saloon was laid with rich carpets, huge fires blazed in the double chimnies, and ten silver sconces reflecting, with their bright plates, the lights which they supported, made the whole seem as brilliant as day.

"Would you chuse any refreshment, Master?" said Sir William Ashton, not unwilling to break the awkward silence.

He received no answer, the Master being so busily engaged in marking the various changes which had taken place in the apartment, that he hardly heard the Lord Keeper address him. A repetition of the offer of refreshment, with the addition, that the family meal would be presently ready, compelled his attention, and reminded him, that he acted a weak, perhaps even a ridiculous part, in suffering himself to be overcome by the circumstances in which he found himself. He compelled himself, therefore, to enter into conversation with Sir William Ashton, with as much appearance of indifference as he could well command.

"You will not be surprised, Sir William, that I am interested in the changes you have made for the better in this apartment. In my father's time, after our misfortunes compelled him to live in retirement, it was little used, except by me as a play-room, when the weather would not permit me to

go abroad. In that recess was my little work-shop, where I treasured the few carpenter's tools which old Caleb procured for me, and taught me how to use—there, in yonder corner, under that handsome silver sconce, I kept my fishing-rods, and hunting poles, bows, and arrows."

"I have a young birkie," said the Lord Keeper, willing to change the tone of the conversation, "of much the same turn—He is never happy, save when he is in the field—I wonder he is not here.—Here, Lockhard—send William Shaw for Mr Henry—I suppose he is, as usual, tied to Lucy's apron-string—that foolish girl, Master, draws the whole family after her at her pleasure."

Even this allusion to his daughter, though artfully thrown out, did not recal Ravenswood from his own topic.

"We were obliged to leave," he said, "some armour and portraits in this apartment—may I ask where they have been removed to?"

"Why," answered the Keeper, with some hesitation, "the room was fitted up in our absence—and *cedant arma togæ*, is the maxim of lawyers you know—I am afraid it has been here somewhat too literally complied with. I hope—I believe they are safe—I am sure I gave orders—may I hope that when they are recovered and put in proper order, you will do me the honour to accept them at my hand, as an atonement for their accidental derangement?"

The Master of Ravenswood bowed stifly, and, with folded arms, again resumed his survey of the room.

Henry, a spoilt boy of fifteen, burst into the room, and ran up to his father. "Think of Lucy, papa; she has come home so cross and so fractious, that she will not go down to the stable to see my new poney, that Bob Wilson brought from the Mull of Galloway."

"I think you were very unreasonable to ask her," said the Keeper.

"Then you are as cross as she is," answered the boy; "and when mamma comes home she'll claw up both your mittens."

"Hush your impertinence, you little forward imp," said his father; "where is your tutor?"

"Gone to a wedding at Dunbar—I hope he'll get a haggis to his dinner;" and he began to sing the old Scottish song,

"There was a haggis in Dunbar,
Fal de ral, &c.
Mony better and few waur,
Fal de ral," &c.

"I am much obliged to Mr Cordery for his attentions," said the Lord Keeper; "and pray who has had charge of you while I was away, Mr Henry?"

"Norman and Bob Wilson—forbye my own self."

"A groom and a game-keeper, and your own silly self—proper guardians for a young advocate!—Why, you will never

know any statutes but those against shooting red deer, killing salmon, and"——

"And speaking of red-game," said the young scape-grace, interrupting his father without scruple or hesitation, "Norman has shot a buck, and I shewed the branches to Lucy, and she says they have but eight tynes, and she says that you killed a deer with Lord Bittlebrains' hounds, when you were west away, and do you know she says it had ten tynes—is it true?"

"It may have had twenty, Henry, for what I know; but if you go to that gentleman he can tell you all about it—Go speak to him, Henry—it is the Master of Ravenswood."

While they conversed thus, the father and son were standing by the fire; and the Master having walked towards the upper end of the apartment, stood with his back towards them, apparently engaged in examining one of the paintings. The boy ran up to him, and pulled him by the skirt of the coat with the freedom of a spoilt

child, saying, " I say, sir—if you please to tell me"——but when the Master turned round, and Henry saw his face, he became suddenly and totally disconcerted—walked two or three steps backward, and still gazed on the Master with an air of fear and wonder, which had totally banished from his features their usual expression of pert vivacity.

" Come to me, young gentleman," said the Master, " and I will tell you all I know about the hunt."

" Go to the gentleman, Henry," said his father, " you are not used to be so shy."

But neither invitation nor exhortation had any effect on the boy. On the contrary, he turned round as soon as he had completed his survey of the Master, and walking as cautiously as if he had been treading upon eggs, he glided back to his father, and pressed as close to him as possible. Ravenswood, to avoid hearing the dispute betwixt the father and the over-indulged boy, thought it most polite to

turn his face once more towards the pictures, and pay no attention to what they said.

"Why do you not speak to the Master, you little fool?" said the Lord Keeper.

"I am afraid," said Henry, in a very low tone.

"Afraid, you goose!" said his father, giving him a slight shake by the collar. "What makes you afraid?"

"What makes him so like the picture of Sir Malise Ravenswood, then?" said the boy, whispering.

"What picture, you natural?" said his father. "I used to think you only a scapegrace, but I believe you will turn out a born idiot."

"I tell you it is the picture of old Malise of Ravenswood, and he is as like it as if he had loupen out of the canvas; and it is up in the old Baron's hall that the maids launder the clothes in, and it has armour and not a coat like the gentleman, and he has not a beard and whiskers like the pic-

ture, and it has another kind of thing about the throat and no band-strings as he has, and"——

"And why should not the gentleman be like his ancestor, you silly boy?" said the Lord Keeper.

"Ay; but if he is come to chase us all out of the castle," said the boy, "and has twenty men at his back in disguise—and is come to say, with a hollow voice, *I bide my time*,—and is to kill you on the hearth as Malise did the other man, and whose blood is still to be seen!"

"Hush! nonsense!" said the Lord Keeper, not himself much pleased to hear these disagreeable coincidences forced on his notice. "Master, here comes Lockhard to say dinner is served."

And, at the same instant, Lucy entered at another door, having changed her dress since her return. The exquisite feminine beauty of her countenance, now shaded only by a profusion of sunny tresses; the sylph-like form disencumbered of her heavy

riding-skirt, and mantled in azure silk; the grace of her manner and of her smile, cleared, with a celerity which surprised the Master himself, all the gloomy and unfavourable thoughts which had for some time over-clouded his fancy. In those features, so simply sweet, he could trace no alliance with the pinched visage of the peak-bearded black-capped puritan, or his starched withered spouse, with the craft expressed in the Lord Keeper's countenance, or the haughtiness which predominated in that of his lady; and, while he gazed on Lucy Ashton, she seemed to be an angel descended on earth, unallied to the coarser mortals among whom she deigned to dwell for a season. Such is the power of beauty over a youthful and enthusiastic fancy.

CHAPTER VI.

——————— I do too ill in this,
And must not think but that a parent's plaint
Will move the heavens to pour forth misery
Upon the head of disobediency.
Yet reason tells us, parents are o'erseen,
When with too strict a rein they do hold in
Their child's affection, and controul that love,
Which the high powers divine inspire them with.

The Hog hath lost his Pearl.

The feast of Ravenswood Castle was as remarkable for its profusion, as that of Wolf's Crag had been for its ill-veiled penury. The Lord Keeper might feel internal pride at the contrast, but he had too much *tact* to suffer it to appear. On the contrary, he appeared to remember with pleasure what he called Mr Balderstone's bachelor's meal, and to be rather disgusted than pleased with the display upon his own groaning board.

"We do these things," he said, "because others do them—but I was bred a plain man at my father's frugal table, and I should like well would my wife and family permit me to return to my sowens and my poor-man-of-mutton."

This was a little over-stretched. The Master only answered, "That different ranks—I mean," said he, correcting himself, "different degrees of wealth, require a different style of house-keeping."

This dry remark put a stop to farther conversation on the subject, nor is it necessary to record that which was substituted in its place. The evening was spent with freedom, and even cordiality; and Henry had so far overcome his first apprehensions, that he had settled a party for coursing a stag with the representative and living resemblance of grim Sir Malise of Ravenswood, called the Revenger. The next morning was the appointed time. It rose upon active sportsmen and successful sport. The banquet came in course; and

a pressing invitation to tarry yet another day was given and accepted. This Ravenswood had resolved should be the last of his stay; but he recollected he had not yet visited the ancient and devoted servant of his house, old Alice, and it was but kind to dedicate one morning to the gratification of so ancient an adherent.

To visit Alice, therefore, a day was devoted, and Lucy was the Master's guide upon the way. Henry, it is true, accompanied them, and took from their walk the air of a *tête-a-tête*, while, in reality, it was little else, considering the variety of circumstances which occurred to prevent the boy from giving the least attention to what passed between his companions. Now a rook settled on a branch within shot—anon a hare crossed their path, and Henry and his greyhound went astray in pursuit of it—then he had to hold a long conversation with the forester, which detained him a while behind his companions—and again

he went to examine the earth of a badger, which carried him on a good way before them.

The conversation betwixt the Master and his sister, meanwhile, took an interesting, and almost a confidential turn. She could not help mentioning her sense of the pain he must feel in visiting scenes so well known to him, bearing now an aspect so different; and so gently was her sympathy expressed, that Ravenswood felt it for a moment as a full requital of all his misfortunes. Some such sentiment escaped him, which Lucy heard with more of confusion than displeasure; and she may be forgiven the imprudence of listening to such language, considering that the situation in which she was placed by her father seemed to authorise Ravenswood to use it. Yet she made an effort to turn the conversation, and she succeeded; for the Master also had advanced farther than he intended, and his conscience had instantly check-

ed him when he found himself on the verge of speaking of love to the daughter of Sir William Ashton.

They now approached the hut of old Alice, which had of late been rendered more comfortable, and presented an appearance less picturesque, perhaps, but far neater than before. The old woman was on her accustomed seat beneath the weeping birch, basking, with the listless enjoyment of age and infirmity, in the beams of the autumn sun. At the arrival of her visitors she turned her head towards them. "I hear your step, Miss Ashton," she said, "but the gentleman who attends you is not my lord, your father."

"And why should you think so, Alice?" said Lucy; "or how is it possible for you to judge so accurately by the sound of a step, on this firm earth, and in the open air?"

"My hearing, my child, has been sharpened by my blindness, and I can now judge

of the slightest sounds, which formerly reached my ears as unheeded as they now approach yours. Necessity is a stern, but an excellent school-mistress, and she that has lost her sight must collect her information from other sources."

"Well, you hear a man's step, I grant it," said Lucy; "but why, Alice, may it not be my father's?"

"The pace of age, my love, is timid and cautious—the foot takes leave of the earth slowly, and is planted down upon it with hesitation; it is the hasty and determined step of youth that I now hear, and—could I give credit to so strange a thought—I should say it was the step of a Ravenswood."

"This is indeed," said Ravenswood, "an acuteness of organ which I could not have credited had I not witnessed it.—I am indeed the Master of Ravenswood, Alice—the son of your old master."

"You?" said the old woman with almost

a scream of surprise—" you the Master of Ravenswood—here—in this place, and thus accompanied ?—I cannot believe it—Let me pass my old hand over your face, that my touch may bear witness to my ears."

The Master sate down beside her on the earthen bank, and permitted her to touch his features with her trembling hand.

" It is indeed !" she said, " it is the features as well as the voice of Ravenswood—the high lines of pride, as well as the bold and haughty tone—But what do you here, Master of Ravenswood ?—what do you in your enemy's domain, and in company with his child ?"

As old Alice spoke, her face kindled, as probably that of an ancient feudal vassal might have done, in whose presence his youthful liege-lord had shewed some symptom of degenerating from the spirit of his ancestors.

" The Master of Ravenswood," said Lucy, who liked not the tone of this ex-

postulation, and was desirous to abridge it, " is upon a visit to my father."

" Indeed !" said the old blind woman, in an accent of surprise.

" I knew," continued Lucy, " I should do him a pleasure by conducting him to your cottage."

" Where, to say the truth, Alice," said Ravenswood, " I expected a more cordial reception."

" It is most wonderful," said the old woman, muttering to herself; " but the ways of Heaven are not like our ways, and its judgments are brought about by means far beyond our fathoming.—Hearken, young man," she said ; " your fathers were implacable, but they were honourable foes; they sought not to ruin their enemies under the mask of hospitality. What have you to do with Lucy Ashton ?—why should your steps move in the same foot-path with her's ?—why should your voice sound in the same chord and time with those of Sir William

Ashton's daughter?—Young man, he who aims at revenge by dishonourable means"—

"Be silent, woman!" said Ravenswood sternly; "is it the devil that prompts your voice?—Know that this young lady has not on earth a friend, who would venture farther to save her from injury or from insult."

"And is it even so?" said the old woman, in an altered but melancholy tone—"then God help you both!"

"Amen! Alice," said Lucy, who had not comprehended the import of what the blind woman had hinted, "and send you your senses, Alice, and your good-humour. If you hold this mysterious language instead of welcoming your friends, they will think of you as other people do."

"And how do other people think?" said Ravenswood, for he also began to think the old woman spoke with incoherence.

"They think," said Henry Ashton, who came up at that moment, and whispered

into Ravenswood's ear, "that she is a witch that should have been burned with them that suffered at Haddington."

"What is that you say?" said Alice, turning towards the boy, her sightless visage inflamed with passion, "that I am a witch, and ought to have suffered with the helpless old wretches who were murdered at Haddington?"

"Hear to that now," again whispered Henry, "and me whispering lower than a wren cheeps."

"If the usurer, and the oppressor, and the grinder of the poor man's face, and the remover of ancient land-marks, and the subverter of ancient houses, were at the same stake with me, I could say, light the fire, in God's name!"

"This is dreadful," said Lucy; "I have never seen the poor deserted woman in this state of mind; but age and poverty can ill bear reproach.—Come, Henry, we will leave her for the present—she wishes to speak with the Master alone. We will

walk homeward, and rest us," she added, looking at Ravenswood, "by the Mermaiden's Well."

"And Alice," said the boy, "if you know of any hare that comes through among the deer, and makes them drop their calves out of season, you may tell her, with my compliments to command, that if Norman has not got a silver bullet ready for her, I'll lend him one of my doublet-buttons on purpose."

Alice made no answer till she was aware that they were out of hearing. She then said to Ravenswood, "And you, too, are angry with me for my love?—it is just that strangers should be offended, but you, too, are angry."

"I am not angry, Alice," said the Master, "only surprised that you, whose good sense I have heard so often praised, should give way to offensive and unfounded suspicions."

"Offensive?" said Alice—"Ay, truth is

ever offensive—but, surely, not unfounded."

"I tell you, dame, most groundless," replied Ravenswood.

"Then the world has changed its wont, and the Ravenswoods their hereditary temper, and the eyes of old Alice's understanding are yet more blind than those of her countenance. When did a Ravenswood seek the house of his enemy, but with the purpose of revenge?—and hither you are come, Edgar Ravenswood, either in fatal anger, or in still more fatal love."

"In neither," said Ravenswood, "I give you mine honour—I mean, I assure you."

Alice could not see his blushing cheek, but she noticed his hesitation, and that he retracted the pledge which he seemed at first disposed to attach to his denial.

"It is so, then," she said, "and therefore she is to tarry by the Mermaiden's Well! Often has it been called a place fatal to the race of Ravenswood—often has

it proved so—but never was it likely to verify old sayings so much as on this day."

"You drive me to madness, Alice," said Ravenswood; "you are more silly and more superstitious than old Balderstone. Are you such a wretched Christian as to suppose I should maintain war with the Ashton family, as was the sanguinary custom in elder times? or do you suppose me so foolish, that I cannot walk by a young lady's side without plunging headlong in love with her?"

"My thoughts," replied Alice, "are my own; and if my mortal sight is closed to objects present with me, it may be I can look with more steadiness into future events. Are you prepared to sit lowest at the board which was once your father's own, unwillingly, as a connection and ally of his proud successor?—Are you ready to live on his bounty—to follow him in the bye-paths of intrigue and chicane, which none can better point out to you—to gnaw the bones

of his prey when he has devoured the substance?—Can you say as Sir William Ashton says—think as he thinks—vote as he votes, and call your father's murderer your worshipful father-in-law and revered patron?—Ravenswood, I am the eldest servant of your house, and I would rather see you shrouded and coffined."

The tumult in Ravenswood's mind was uncommonly great; she struck upon and awakened a chord which he had for some time successfully silenced. He strode backwards and forwards through the little garden with a hasty pace; and at length checking himself, and stopping right opposite to Alice, he exclaimed, "Woman! on the verge of the grave, dare you urge the son of your master to blood and to revenge?"

"God forbid!" said Alice solemnly; "and therefore I would have you depart these fatal bounds, where your love, as well as your hatred, threatens sure mischief, or at least disgrace, both to yourself

and others. I would shield, were it in the power of this withered hand, the Ashtons from you and you from them, and both from their own passions. You can have nothing—ought to have nothing, in common with them—Begone from among them; and if God has destined vengeance on the oppressor's house, do not you be the instrument."

"I will think on what you have said, Alice," said Ravenswood more composedly. "I believe you mean truly and faithfully by me, but you urge the freedom of an ancient domestic somewhat too far. But farewell; and if Heaven afford me better means, I will not fail to contribute to your comfort."

He attempted to put a piece of gold into her hand, which she refused to receive; and, in the slight struggle attending his wish to force it upon her, it dropped to the earth.

"Let it remain an instant on the ground," said Alice, as the Master stooped to raise

it; "and believe me, that piece of gold is an emblem of her whom you love; she is as precious, I grant, but you must stoop even to abasement before you can win her. For me, I have as little to do with gold as with earthly passions; and the best news that the world has in store for me is, that Edgar Ravenswood is an hundred miles distant from the seat of his ancestors, with the determination never again to review it."

"Alice," said the Master, who began to think this earnestness had some more secret cause than arose from any thing that the blind woman could have gathered from this casual visit, "I have heard you praised by my mother for your sense, acuteness, and fidelity; you are no fool to start at shadows, or to dread old superstitious saws, like Caleb Balderstone; tell me distinctly where my danger lies, if you are aware of any which is tending towards me. If I know myself, I am free from all such views respecting Miss Ashton as you impute to me. I have necessary business to settle

with Sir William—that arranged, I shall depart; and with as little wish, as you may easily believe, to return to a place full of melancholy subjects of reflection, as you have to see me here."

Alice bent her sightless eyes on the ground, and was for a moment plunged in deep meditation. "I will speak the truth," she said, at length raising up her head—"I will tell you the source of my apprehensions, whether my candour be for good or evil—Lucy Ashton loves you, Lord of Ravenswood!"

"It is impossible," said the Master.

"A thousand circumstances have proved it to me. Her thoughts have turned on no one else since you saved her from death, and that my experienced judgment has won from her own conversation. Having told you this—if you are indeed a gentleman and your father's son—you will make it a motive for flying from her presence. Her passion will die like a lamp, for want of that the flame should feed upon; but, if you re-

main here, her destruction, or yours, or that of both, will be the inevitable consequence of her misplaced attachment. I tell you this secret unwillingly, but it could not have been hid long from your own observation; and it is better you learn it from mine. Depart, Master of Ravenswood—you have my secret. If you remain an hour under Sir William Ashton's roof without the resolution to marry his daughter, you are a villain—if with the purpose of allying yourself with him, you are an infatuated and predestined fool."

So saying, the old blind woman arose, assumed her staff, and, tottering to her hut, entered it and closed the door, leaving Ravenswood to his own reflections.

CHAPTER VII.

"Lovelier in her own retired abode
——— than Naiad by the side
Of Grecian brook—or Lady of the Mere
Lone sitting by the shores of old romance.

WORDSWORTH.

THE meditations of Ravenswood were of a very mixed complexion. He saw himself at once in the very dilemma which he had for some time felt apprehensive he might be placed in. The pleasure he felt in Lucy's company had indeed approached to fascination, yet it had never altogether surmounted his internal reluctance to wed with the daughter of his father's foe; and even in forgiving Sir William Ashton the injuries which his house had received, and giving him credit for the kind intentions he professed to entertain, he could not

bring himself to contemplate as possible an alliance betwixt their houses. Still he felt that Alice spoke truth, and that his honour now required he should take an instant leave of Ravenswood Castle, or become a suitor of Lucy Ashton. The possibility of being rejected, too, should he make advances to her wealthy and powerful father—to sue for the hand of an Ashton and be refused—this were a consummation too disgraceful. "I wish her well," he said to himself, "and for her sake I forgive the injuries her father has done to my house; but I will never—no, never see her more!"

With one bitter pang he adopted this resolution, just as he came to where two paths parted; the one to the Mermaiden's Fountain, where he knew Lucy waited him, the other leading to the castle by another and more circuitous road. He paused an instant when about to take the latter path, thinking what apology he should make for conduct which must needs seem extraor-

dinary, and had just muttered to himself, "Sudden news from Edinburgh—any pretext will serve—only let me dally no longer here," when young Henry came flying up to him, half out of breath—"Master, Master—you must give Lucy your arm back to the castle, for I cannot give her mine; for Norman is waiting for me, and I am to go with him to make his ring-walk, and I would not stay away for a gold Jacobus, and Lucy is afraid to walk home alone, though all the wild nowt have been shot, and so you must come away directly."

Betwixt two scales equally loaded, a feather's weight will turn the scale. "It is impossible for me to leave the young lady in the wood alone," said Ravenswood; "to see her once more can be of little consequence, after the frequent meetings we have had—I ought too, in courtesy, to apprize her of my intention to quit the castle."

And having thus satisfied himself that he was taking not only a wise, but an ab-

solutely necessary step, he took the path to the fatal fountain. Henry no sooner saw him on the way to join his sister, than he was off like lightning in another direction, to enjoy the society of the forester in their congenial pursuits. Ravenswood, not allowing himself to give a second thought to the propriety of his own conduct, walked with a quick step towards the stream, where he found Lucy seated alone by the ruin.

She sate upon one of the disjointed stones of the ancient fountain, and seemed to watch the progress of its current, as it bubbled forth to day-light, in gay and sparkling profusion, from under the shadow of the ribbed and darksome vault with which veneration, or perhaps remorse, had canopied its source. To a superstitious eye, Lucy Ashton, folded in her plaiden mantle, with her long hair, escaping partly from the snood and falling upon her silver neck, might have suggested the idea of the murdered Nymph of the Fountain.

But Ravenswood only saw a female exquisitely beautiful, and rendered yet more so in his eyes—how could it be otherwise—by the consciousness that she had placed her affections on him. As he gazed on her, he felt his fixed resolution melting like wax in the sun, and hastened, therefore, from his concealment in the neighbouring thicket. She saluted him, but did not arise from the stone on which she was seated.

"My mad-cap brother," she said, "has left me, but I expect him back in a few minutes—for fortunately, as every thing, at least any thing, pleases him for a minute, nothing has charms for him much longer."

Ravenswood did not feel the power of informing Lucy that her brother meditated a distant excursion, and would not return in haste. He sate himself down on the grass, at some little distance from Miss Ashton, and both were silent for a short space.

"I like this spot," said Lucy at length, as if she had found the silence embarrassing; "the bubbling murmur of the clear fountain, the waving of the trees, the profusion of grass and wild-flowers, that rise among the ruins, make it like a scene in romance. I think, too, I have heard it is a spot connected with the legendary lore which I love so well."

"It has been thought," answered Ravenswood, "a fatal spot to our family, and I have some reason to term it so, for it was here I first saw Miss Ashton—and it is here I must take my leave of her for ever."

The blood, which the first part of this speech called into Lucy's cheeks, was speedily expelled by its conclusion.

"To take leave of us, Master!" she exclaimed; "what can have happened to hurry you away?—I know Alice hates—I mean dislikes my father—and I hardly understood her humour to-day, it was so mysterious. But I am certain my father is

sincerely grateful for the high service you rendered us. Let me hope that having won your friendship hardly, we shall not lose it lightly."

"Lose it, Miss Ashton?—No—wherever my fortune calls me—whatever she inflicts upon me—it is your friend—your sincere friend, who acts or suffers. But there is a fate on me, and I must go, or I shall add the ruin of others to my own."

"Yet do not go from us, Master," said Lucy; and she laid her hand, in all simplicity and kindness, upon the skirt of his cloak, as if to detain him—"You shall not part from us—My father is powerful! he has friends that are more so than himself—do not go till you see what his gratitude will do for you. Believe me, he is already labouring in your behalf with the Council."

"It may be so," said the Master, proudly; "yet it is not to your father, Miss Ashton, but to my own exertions, that I ought to owe success in the career on which I am about to enter. My prepara-

tions are already made—a sword and a cloak, and a bold heart and a determined hand."

Lucy covered her face with her hands, and the tears, in spite of her, forced their way between her fingers. "Forgive me," said Ravenswood, taking her right hand, which, after slight resistance, she yielded to him, still continuing to shade her face with the left—"I am too rude—too rough—too intractable to deal with any being so soft and gentle as you are. Forget that so stern a vision has crossed your path of life—and let me pursue mine, sure that I can meet with no worse misfortune after the moment it divides me from your side."

Lucy wept on, but her tears were less bitter. Each attempt which the Master made to explain his purpose of departure, only proved a new evidence of his desire to stay; until, at length, instead of bidding her farewell, he gave his faith to her for ever, and received her troth in return. The whole passed so suddenly, and arose

so much out of the immediate impulse of the moment, that ere the Master of Ravenswood could reflect upon the consequences of the step which he had taken, their lips, as well as their hands, had pledged the sincerity of their affection.

"And now," he said, after a moment's consideration, "it is fit I should speak to Sir William Ashton—he must know of our engagement. Ravenswood must not seem to dwell under his roof, to solicit clandestinely the affections of his daughter."

"You would not speak to my father on the subject," said Lucy, doubtingly; and then added more warmly, "O do not—do not! Let your lot in life be determined—your station and purpose ascertained, before you address my father; I am sure he loves you—I think he will consent—but then my mother"——

She paused, ashamed to express the doubt she felt how far her father dared to form any positive resolution on this most

important subject, without the consent of his lady.

"Your mother, my Lucy?" replied Ravenswood; "she is of the house of Douglas, a house that has intermarried with mine, even when its glory and power were at the highest—what could your mother object to my alliance?"

"I did not say object," said Lucy; "but she is jealous of her rights, and may claim a mother's title to be consulted in the first instance."

"Be it so," replied Ravenswood; "London is distant, but a letter will reach it and receive an answer within a fortnight—I will not press on the Lord Keeper for an instant reply to my proposal."

"But," hesitated Lucy, "were it not better to wait—to wait a few weeks—were my mother to see you—to know you—I am sure she would approve; but you are unacquainted personally, and the ancient feud between the families"——

Ravenswood fixed upon her his keen

dark eyes, as if he was desirous of penetrating into her very soul.

"Lucy," he said, "I have sacrificed to you projects of vengeance long nursed, and sworn to with ceremonies little better than heathen—I sacrificed them to your image, ere I knew the worth which it represented. In the evening which succeeded my poor father's funeral, I cut a lock from my hair, and, as it consumed in the fire, I swore that my rage and revenge should pursue his enemies, until they shrivelled before me like that scorched-up symbol of annihilation."

"It was a deadly sin," said Lucy, turning pale, "to make a vow so fatal."

"I acknowledge it," said Ravenswood, "and it had been a worse crime to keep it. It was for your sake that I abjured these purposes of vengeance, though I scarce knew that such was the argument by which I was conquered, until I saw you once more, and became conscious of the influence you possessed over me."

"And why do you now," said Lucy, "recall sentiments so terrible—sentiments so inconsistent with those you profess for me—with those your importunity has prevailed on me to acknowledge?"

"Because I would impress on you the price at which I have bought your love—the right I have to expect your constancy. I say not that I have bartered for it the honour of my house, its last remaining possession—but though I say it not, and think it not, I cannot conceal from myself that the world may do both."

"If such are your sentiments," said Lucy, "you have played a cruel game with me. But it is not too late to give it over—take back the faith and troth which you could not plight to me without suffering abatement of honour—let what is passed be as if it had not been—forget me—I will endeavour to forget myself."

"You do me injustice," said the Master of Ravenswood; "by all I hold true and honourable, you do me the extremity of

injustice — if I mentioned the price at which I have bought your love, it is only to shew how much I prize it, to bind our engagement by a still firmer tie, and to shew, by what I have done to attain this station in your regard, how much I must suffer should you ever break your faith."

"And why, Ravenswood," answered Lucy, "should you think that possible?—Why should you urge me with even the mention of infidelity?—Is it because I ask you to delay applying to my father for a little space of time? Bind me by what vows you please; if vows are unnecessary to secure constancy, they may yet prevent suspicion."

Ravenswood pleaded, apologized, and even kneeled, to appease her displeasure; and Lucy, as placable as she was single-hearted, readily forgave the offence which his doubts had implied. The dispute thus agitated, however, ended by the lovers going through an emblematic ceremony of their troth-plight of which the vulgar still

preserve some traces. They broke betwixt them the thin broad-piece of gold which Alice had refused to receive from Ravenswood.

"And never shall this leave my bosom," said Lucy, as she hung the piece of gold round her neck, and concealed it with her handkerchief, "until you, Edgar Ravenswood, ask me to resign it to you—and, while I wear it, never shall that heart acknowledge another love than your's."

With like protestations, Ravenswood placed his portion of the coin opposite to his heart. And now, at length, it struck them, that time had hurried fast on during this interview, and their absence at the castle would be subject of remark, if not of alarm. As they arose to leave the fountain which had been witness of their mutual engagement, an arrow whistled through the air, and struck a raven perched on the sere branch of an old oak, near to where they had been seated. The bird fluttered a few yards, and dropped at the

feet of Lucy, whose dress was stained with some spots of its blood.

Miss Ashton was much alarmed, and Ravenswood, surprised and angry, looked everywhere for the marksman, who had given them a proof of his skill as little expected as desired. He was not long of discovering himself, being no other than Henry Ashton, who came running up with a cross-bow in his hand.

"I knew I should startle you," he said; "and do you know you looked so busy that I thought it would have fallen souse on your heads before you were aware of it —What was the Master saying to you, Lucy?"

"I was telling your sister what an idle lad you were, keeping us waiting here for you so long," said Ravenswood, to save Lucy's confusion.

"Waiting for me? Why, I told you to see Lucy home, and that I was to go to make the ring-walk with old Norman in the Hayberry thicket, and you may be

sure that would take a good hour, and we have all the deer's marks and furnishes got, while you were sitting here with Lucy like a lazy loon."

"Well, well, Mr Henry," said Ravenswood; "but let us see how you will answer to me for killing the raven. Do you know the ravens are all under the protection of the Lords of Ravenswood, and, to kill one in their presence, is such bad luck that it deserves the stab?"

"And that's what Norman said," replied the boy; "he came as far with me as within a flight-shot of you, and he said he never saw a raven sit still so near living folks, and he wished it might be for good luck; for the raven is one of the wildest birds that flies, unless it be a tame one—and so I crept on and on, till I was within three score yards of him, and then whiz went the bolt, and there he lies, faith! Was it not well shot?—and, I dare say, I have not shot in a cross-bow—not ten times, maybe."

"Admirably shot indeed," said Ravenswood; "and you will be a fine marksman if you practise hard."

"That's what Norman says," answered the boy; "but I am sure it is not my fault if I do not practise enough; for, of free will, I would do little else, only my father and tutor are angry sometimes, and only Miss Lucy there gives herself airs about my being busy, for all she can sit idle by a well-side the whole day when she has a handsome young gentleman to prate wi'—I have known her do so twenty times, if you will believe me."

The boy looked at his sister as he spoke, and, in the midst of his mischievous chatter, had the sense to see that he was really inflicting pain upon her, though without being able to comprehend the cause or the amount.

"Come now, Lucy," he said, "don't greet; and if I have said any thing beside the mark, I'll deny it again—and what does the Master of Ravenswood care if you had

a hundred sweethearts—so ne'er put fingers in your eye about it."

The Master of Ravenswood was, for the moment, scarce satisfied with what he heard; yet his good sense naturally regarded it as the chatter of a spoiled boy, who strove to mortify his sister in the point which seemed most accessible for the time. But, although of a temper equally slow in receiving impressions, and obstinate in retaining them, the prattle of Henry served to nourish in his mind some vague suspicion, that his present engagement might only end in his being exposed like a vanquished enemy in a Roman triumph, a captive attendant on the car of a victor, who meditated only the satiating his pride at the expense of the vanquished. There was, we repeat it, no real ground whatever for such an apprehension, nor could he be said seriously to entertain such for a moment. Indeed it was impossible to look at the clear blue eye of Lucy Ashton, and entertain the slightest permanent

doubt concerning the sincerity of her disposition. Still, however, conscious pride and conscious poverty combined to render a mind suspicious, which, in more fortunate circumstances, would have been a stranger to that as well as to other meanness.

They reached the castle, where Sir William Ashton, who had been alarmed by the length of their stay, met them in the hall.

"Had Lucy," he said, "been in any other company than that of one who had shewn he had so complete power of protecting her, he confessed he should have been very uneasy, and would have dispatched persons in quest of them. But, in the company of the Master of Ravenswood, he knew his daughter had nothing to dread."

Lucy commenced some apology for their long delay, but, conscience-struck, became confused as she proceeded; and when Ravenswood, coming to her assistance, en-

deavoured to render the explanation complete and satisfactory, he only involved himself in the same disorder, like one who, endeavouring to extricate his companion from a slough, entangles himself in the same tenacious swamp. It cannot be supposed that the confusion of the two youthful lovers escaped the observation of the wily lawyer, accustomed, by habit and profession, to trace human nature through all her windings. But it was not his present policy to take any notice of what he observed. He desired to hold the Master of Ravenswood bound, but wished that he himself should be free; and it did not occur to him that his plan might be defeated by Lucy's returning the passion which he hoped she might inspire. If she should adopt some romantic feelings towards Ravenswood, in which circumstances, or the positive and absolute opposition of Lady Ashton, might render it unadvisable to indulge her, the Lord Keeper conceived they might be easily superseded and an-

nulled by a journey to Edinburgh, or even to London, a new set of Brussels lace, and the soft whispers of half a dozen of lovers, anxious to replace him whom it was convenient she should renounce. This was his provision for the worst view of the case. But, according to its more probable issue, any passing favour she might entertain for the Master of Ravenswood, might require encouragement rather than repression.

This seemed the more likely, as he had that very morning, since their departure from the castle, received a letter, the contents of which he hastened to communicate to Ravenswood. A foot-post had arrived with a packet to the Lord Keeper from that friend whom we have already mentioned, who was labouring hard under-hand to consolidate a band of patriots, at the head of whom stood Sir William's greatest terror, the active and ambitious Marquis of A——. The success of this convenient friend had been such, that he

had obtained from Sir William, not indeed a directly favourable answer, but certainly a most patient hearing. This he had reported to his principal, who had replied, by the ancient French adage, "*Château qui parle, et femme qui ecoute, l'un et l'autre va se rendre.*" A statesman who hears you propose a change of measures without reply, was, according to the Marquis's opinion, in the situation of the fortress which parleys, and the lady who listens, and he resolved to press the siege of the Lord Keeper.

The packet, therefore, contained a letter from his friend and ally, and another from himself to the Lord Keeper, frankly offering an unceremonious visit. They were crossing the country to go to the southward—the roads were indifferent—the accommodation of the inns as execrable as possible—the Lord Keeper had been long acquainted intimately with one of his correspondents, and though more slightly known to the Marquis, had yet enough of his Lordship's acquaintance to

render the visit sufficiently natural, and to shut the mouths of those who might be disposed to impute it to a political intrigue. He instantly accepted the offered visit, determined, however, that he would not pledge himself an inch farther for the furtherance of their views than *reason* (by which he meant his own self-interest) should plainly point out to him as proper.

Two circumstances particularly delighted him; the presence of Ravenswood, and the absence of his own lady. By having the former under his roof, he conceived he might be able to quash all such hazardous and hostile proceedings as he might otherwise have been engaged in, under the patronage of the Marquis; and Lucy, he foresaw, would make, for his immediate purpose of delay and procrastination, a much better mistress of his family than her mother, who would, he was sure, in some shape or other, contrive to disconcert his political schemes by her proud and implacable temper.

His anxious solicitations that the Master would stay to receive his kinsman, were of course readily complied with, since the *ecclaircissement* which had taken place at the Mermaiden's Fountain had removed all wish for sudden departure. Lucy and Lockhard had, therefore, orders to provide all things necessary in their different departments, for receiving the expected guests, with a pomp and display of luxury very uncommon in Scotland at that remote period.

CHAPTER VIII.

Marall. Sir, the man of honour's come,
Newly alighted———
Overreach. In without reply,
And do as I command.——
Is the loud music I gave order for
Ready to receive him?——
New Way to Pay Old Debts.

Sir William Ashton, although a man of sense, legal information, and great practical knowledge of the world, had yet some points of character which corresponded better with the timidity of his disposition and the supple arts by which he had risen in the world, than to the degree of eminence which he had attained; as they tended to shew an original mediocrity of understanding, however highly it had been culti-

vated, and a native meanness of disposition, however carefully veiled. He loved the ostentatious display of his wealth, less as a man to whom habit has made it necessary, than as one to whom it is still delightful from its novelty. The most trivial details did not escape him; and Lucy soon learned to watch the flush of scorn which crossed Ravenswood's cheek, when he heard her father gravely arguing with Lockhard, nay, even with the old housekeeper, upon circumstances which, in families of rank, are left uncared for, because it is supposed impossible they can be neglected.

"I could pardon Sir William," said Ravenswood one evening after he had left the room, "some general anxiety upon this occasion, for the Marquis's visit is an honour, and should be received as such; but I am worn out by these miserable minutiæ of the buttery, and the larder, and the very hen-coop—they drive me beyond my patience; I would rather endure the poverty

of Wolf's Crag, than be pestered with the wealth of Ravenswood Castle."

"And yet," said Lucy, "it was by attention to these minutiæ that my father acquired the property"——

"Which my ancestors sold for lack of it," answered Ravenswood. "Be it so; a porter still bears but a burthen, though the burthen be of gold."

Lucy sighed; she perceived too plainly that her lover held in scorn the manners and habits of a father, to whom she had long looked up as her best and most partial friend, whose fondness had often consoled her for her mother's contemptuous harshness.

The lovers soon discovered that they differed upon other and no less important topics. Religion, the mother of peace, was, in those days of discord, so much misconstrued and mistaken, that her rules and forms were the subject of the most opposite opinions and the most hostile animosi-

ties. The Lord Keeper, being a whig, was, of course, a presbyterian, and had found it convenient, at different periods, to express greater zeal for the kirk, than perhaps he really felt. His family, equally of course, were trained under the same institution. Ravenswood, as we know, was a High-Church man, or Episcopalian, and frequently objected to Lucy the fanaticism of some of her own communion, while she intimated, rather than expressed, horror at the latitudinarian principles which she had been taught to think connected with the prelatical form of church-government.

Thus, although their mutual affection seemed to increase rather than to be diminished, as their characters opened more fully on each other, the feelings of each were mingled with some less agreeable ingredients. Lucy felt a secret awe, amid all her affection for Ravenswood. His soul was of an higher, prouder character, than those with whom she had hitherto mixed

in intercourse; his ideas were more fierce and free; and he contemned many of the opinions which had been inculcated upon her, as chiefly demanding her veneration. On the other hand, Ravenswood saw in Lucy a soft and flexible character, which, in his eyes at least, seemed too susceptible of being moulded to any form by those with whom she lived. He felt that his own temper required a partner of a more independent spirit, who could set sail with him on his course of life, resolved as himself to dare indifferently the storm and the favouring breeze. But Lucy was so beautiful, so devotedly attached to him, of a temper so exquisitely soft and kind, that, while he could have wished it were possible to inspire her with a greater degree of firmness and resolution, and while he sometimes became impatient of the extreme fear which she expressed of their attachment being prematurely discovered, he felt that the softness of a mind, amounting almost to feebleness, rendered her

even dearer to him, as a being who had voluntarily clung to him for protection, and made him the arbiter of her fate for weal or woe. His feelings towards her at such moments, were those which have been since so beautifully expressed by our immortal Joanna Baillie :

——————" Thou sweetest thing,
That e'er did fix its lightly-fibred sprays
To the rude rock, ah ! would'st thou cling to me ?
Rough and storm-worn I am—yet love me as
Thou truly dost, I will love thee again
With true and honest heart, though all unmeet
To be the mate of such sweet gentleness."

Thus the very points in which they differed, seemed, in some measure, to ensure the continuance of their mutual affection. If, indeed, they had so fully appreciated each other's character before the burst of passion in which they hastily pledged their faith to each other, Lucy might have feared Ravenswood too much ever to have loved him, and he might have construed

her softness and docile temper as imbecility, rendering her unworthy of his regard. But they stood pledged to each other; and Lucy only feared that her lover's pride might one day teach him to regret his attachment, Ravenswood that a mind so ductile as Lucy's might, in absence or difficulties, be induced, by the entreaties or influence of those around her, to renounce the engagement she had formed.

"Do not fear it," said Lucy, when, upon one occasion, a hint of such suspicion escaped her lover; "the mirrors which receive the reflection of all successive objects are framed of hard materials like glass or steel—the softer substances, when they receive an impression, retain it undefaced."

"This is poetry, Lucy," said Ravenswood; "and in poetry there is always fallacy, and sometimes fiction."

"Believe me then, once more, in honest prose," said Lucy, "that, though I will never wed man without the consent of my

parents, yet neither force nor persuasion shall dispose of my hand till you renounce the right I have given you to it."

The lovers had ample time for such explanations. Henry was now more seldom their companion, being either a most unwilling attendant upon the lessons of his tutor, or a forward volunteer under the instructions of the foresters or grooms. As for the Keeper, his mornings were spent in his study, maintaining correspondences of all kinds, and balancing in his anxious mind the various intelligence which he collected from every quarter concerning the expected change of Scottish politics, and the probable strength of the parties who were about to struggle for power. At other times he busied himself about arranging, and countermanding, and then again arranging, the preparations which he judged necessary for the reception of the Marquis of A——, whose arrival had been twice delayed by some necessary cause of detention.

In the midst of all these various avocations, political and domestic, he seemed not to observe how much his daughter and his guest were thrown into each other's society, and was censured by many of his neighbours, according to the fashion of neighbours in all countries, for suffering such an intimate connection to take place betwixt two young persons. The only natural explanation was, that he designed them for each other; while, in truth, his only motive was to temporize and procrastinate, until he should discover the real extent of the interest which the Marquis took in Ravenswood's affairs, and the power which he was likely to possess of advancing them. Until these points should be made both clear and manifest, the Lord Keeper resolved that he would do nothing to commit himself, either in one shape or other, and, like many cunning persons, he overreached himself deplorably.

Amongst those who had been disposed to censure, with the greatest severity, the

conduct of Sir William Ashton, in permitting the prolonged residence of Ravenswood under his roof, and his constant attendance on Miss Ashton, was the new Laird of Girninghame, and his faithful squire and bottle-holder, personages formerly well known to us by the names of Hayston and Bucklaw, and his companion Captain Craigengelt. The former had already succeeded to the extensive property of his long-lived grand-aunt, and to considerable wealth besides, which he had employed in redeeming his paternal acres, (by the title appertaining to which he still chose to be designated,) notwithstanding Captain Craigengelt had proposed to him a most advantageous mode of vesting the money in Law's scheme, which was just then set abroach, and offered his services to travel express to Paris for the purpose. But Bucklaw had so far derived wisdom from adversity, that he would listen to no proposal which Craigengelt could invent, having a tendency to risk his newly-acqui-

red independence. He that had once eat pease-bannocks, drank sour wine, and slept in the secret chamber at Wolf's Crag, would, he said, prize good cheer and a soft bed as long as he lived, and take special care never to need such hospitality again.

Craigengelt, therefore, found himself disappointed in the first hopes he had entertained of making a good hand of the Laird of Bucklaw. Still, however, he reaped many advantages from his friend's good fortune. Bucklaw, who had never been at all scrupulous in chusing his companions, was accustomed to, and entertained by a fellow, whom he could either laugh with or laugh at as he had a mind, who would take, according to Scottish phrase, "the bit and the buffet," understood all sports, whether without or within doors, and, when the Laird had a mind for a bottle of wine, (no infrequent circumstance,) was always ready to save him from the scandal of getting drunk by himself. Upon these terms Craigengelt was the frequent, almost the constant, inmate of the house of Girninghame.

In no time, and under no possibility of circumstances, could good have been derived from such an intimacy, however its bad consequences might be qualified by the thorough knowledge which Bucklaw possessed of his dependant's character, and the high contempt in which he held it. But as circumstances stood, this evil communication was particularly liable to corrupt what good principles nature had implanted in the patron.

Craigengelt had never forgiven the scorn with which Ravenswood had torn the mask of courage and honesty from his countenance; and to exasperate Bucklaw's resentment against him, was the safest mode of revenge which occurred to his cowardly, yet cunning and malignant disposition.

He brought up, on all occasions, the story of the challenge which Ravenswood had declined to accept, and endeavoured, by every possible insinuation, to make his patron believe that his honour was con-

cerned in bringing that matter to an issue by a present discussion with Ravenswood. But respecting this subject, Bucklaw imposed on him, at length, a peremptory command of silence.

"I think," he said, "the Master has treated me unlike a gentleman, and I see no right he had to send me back a cavalier answer when I demanded the satisfaction of one—But he gave me my life once—and, in looking the matter over at present, I put myself but on equal terms with him—should he cross me again, I shall consider the old accompt as balanced, and his Mastership will do well to look to himself."

"That he should," re-echoed Craigengelt; "for when you are in practice, Bucklaw, I would bet a magnum you are through him before the third pass."

"Then you know nothing of the matter," said Bucklaw, "and you never saw him fence."

"And I know nothing of the matter?"

—a good jest, I promise you—and though I never saw Ravenswood fence, have I not been at Monsieur Sagoon's school, who was the first *maitre d'armes* at Paris; and have I not been at Signor Poco's at Florence, and Meinherr Durchstossen at Vienna, and have I not seen all their play?"

"I don't know whether you have or not," said Bucklaw; "but what about it, though you had?"

"Only that I will be d—d if ever I saw French, Italian, or High-Dutchman ever make foot, hand, and eye, keep time half so well as you, Bucklaw."

"I believe you lie, Craigie," said Bucklaw; "however, I can hold my own, both with single rapier, back-sword, sword and dagger, broad-sword, or case of faulchions—and that's as much as any gentleman need know of the matter."

"And the double of what ninety-nine out of a hundred know," said Craigengelt; "they learn to change a few thrusts with the small sword, and then, forsooth,

they understand the noble art of defence! Now, when I was at Rouen in the year 1695, there was a Chevalier de Chapon and I went to the Opera, where we found three bits of English birkies——"

"Is it a long story you are going to tell?" said Bucklaw, interrupting him without ceremony.

"Just as you like," answered the parasite, "for we made short work of it."

"Then I like it short," said Bucklaw; "is it serious or merry?"

"Devilish serious, I assure you, and so they found it; for the chevalier and I"——

"Then I don't like it at all," said Bucklaw; "so fill a brimmer of my auld auntie's claret, rest her heart! And, as the Hielandman says, *Skioch doch na skiaill.*" *

"That was what tough old Sir Evan Dhu used to say to me when I was out

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* "Cut a drink with a tale;" equivalent to the English adage of "boon companions, don't preach over your liquor."

with the metall'd lads in 1689. 'Craigengelt,' he used to say, 'you are as pretty a fellow as ever held steel in his grip, but you have one fault.'"

"If he had known you as long as I have done," said Bucklaw, "he would have found out some twenty more; but hang long stories, give us your toast, man."

Craigengelt rose, went a tiptoe to the door, peeped out, shut it carefully, came back again—clapped his tarnished gold-laced hat on one side of his head, took his glass in one hand, and touching the hilt of his hanger with the other, named, "The King over the water."

"I tell you what it is, Captain Craigengelt," said Bucklaw; "I shall keep my mind to myself on these subjects, having too much respect for the memory of my venerable aunt Girnington to put her lands and tenements in the way of committing treason against established authority. Bring me King James to Edinburgh, Captain, with thirty thousand men at his back, and I'll

tell you what I think about his title; but as for running my neck into a noose, and my good broad lands into the statutory penalties, 'in that case, made and provided,' rely upon it you will find me no such fool. So when you mean to vapour with your hanger and your dram-cup in support of treasonable toasts, you must find your liquor and company elsewhere."

"Well, then," said Craigengelt, "name the toast yourself, and be it what it like, I'll pledge you were it a mile to the bottom."

"And I'll give you a toast that deserves it, my boy," said Bucklaw; "what say you to Miss Lucy Ashton?"

"Up with it," said the Captain, as he tossed off his brimmer, "the bonniest lass in Lothian—What a pity the old sneck-drawing whigamore, her father, is about to throw her away upon that rag of pride and beggary, the Master of Ravenswood."

"That's not quite so clear," said Bucklaw, in a tone, which, though it seemed

indifferent, excited his companion's eager curiosity; and not that only, but also his hope of working himself into some sort of confidence, which might make him necessary to his patron, being by no means satisfied to rest on mere sufferance, if he could form, by art or industry, a more permanent title to his favour.

"I thought," said he, after a moment's pause, "that was a settled matter—they are continually together, and nothing else is spoken of betwixt Lammerlaw and Traprain."

"They may say what they please," replied his patron, "but I know better, and I'll give you Miss Lucy Ashton's health again, my boy."

"And I would drink it on my knee," said Craigengelt, "if I thought the girl had the spirit to jilt that d—d son of a Spaniard."

"I am to request you will not use the word jilt and Miss Ashton's name together," said Bucklaw, gravely.

"Jilt, did I say?—discard, my lad of acres—by Jove, I meant to say discard," replied Craigengelt, "and I hope she'll discard him like a small card at piquet, and take in the King of Hearts, my boy—But yet"——

"But what?" said his patron.

"But yet I know for certain they are hours together alone, and in the woods and the fields."

"That's her foolish father's dotage—that will be soon put out of the lass's head, if it ever gets into it," answered Bucklaw. "And now fill your glass again, Captain, I am going to make you happy—I am going to let you into a secret a plot—a noosing plot—only the noose is but typical."

"A marrying matter?" said Craigengelt, and his jaw fell as he asked the question; for he suspected that matrimony would render his situation at Girninghame much more precarious than during the jolly days of his patron's bachelorhood.

"Ay, a marriage, man," said Bucklaw; "but wherefore droops thy mighty spirit, and why grow the rubies on thy cheek so pale? The board will have a corner, and the corner will have a trencher, and the trencher will have a glass beside it; and the board-end shall be filled, and the trencher and the glass shall be replenished for thee, if all the petticoats in Lothian had sworn the contrary—What, man! I am not the boy to put myself into leading strings."

"So says many an honest fellow," said Craigengelt, "and some of my special friends; but, curse me if I know the reason, the women could never bear me, and always contrived to trundle me out of favour before the honey-moon was over."

"If you could have kept your ground till that was over, you might have made a good year's pension," said Bucklaw.

"But I never could," answered the dejected parasite; "there was my Lord Cas-

tle-Cuddy—we were hand and glove—I rode his horses—borrowed money, both for him and from him—trained his hawks, and taught him how to lay his bets; and when he took a fancy of marrying, I married him to Katie Glegg, whom I thought myself as sure of as man could be of woman. Egad, she had me out of the house, as if I had run on wheels, within the first fortnight."

"Well!" replied Bucklaw, "I think I have nothing of Castle-Cuddy about me, or Lucy of Katie Glegg But you see the thing will go on whether you like it or no—the only question is, will you be useful?"

"Useful?—and to thee, my lad of lands, my darling boy, whom I would tramp bare-footed through the world for?—name time, place, mode, and circumstance, and see if I will not be useful in all uses that can be devised."

"Why, then, you must ride two hundred miles for me," said the patron.

"A thousand, and call them a flea's leap," answered the dependent; "I'll cause saddle my horse directly."

"Better stay till you know where you are to go, and what you are to do," quoth Bucklaw. "You know I have a kinswoman in Northumberland, Lady Blenkensop by name, whose old acquaintance I had the misfortune to lose in the period of my poverty, but the light of whose countenance shone forth upon me when the sun of my prosperity began to arise."

"D—n all such double-faced jades," exclaimed Craigengelt, heroically; "this I will say for John Craigengelt, that he is his friend's friend through good report and bad report, poverty and riches; and you know something of that yourself, Bucklaw."

"I have not forgot your merits," said his patron; "I do remember, that, in my extremities, you had a mind to *crimp* me for the service of the French king, or of the Pretender; and, moreover, that you

afterwards lent me a score of pieces, when, as I firmly believe, you had heard the news that old Lady Girnington had a touch of the dead palsy. But don't be down-cast, John; I believe, after all, you like me very well in your way, and it is my misfortune to have no better counsellor at present.—To return to this Lady Blenkensop, you must know she is a close confederate of Duchess Sarah."

"What, of Sall Jennings!" exclaimed Craigengelt; "then she must be a good one."

"Hold your tongue, and keep your Tory rants to yourself, if it be possible," said Bucklaw; "I tell you, that through the Duchess of Marlborough has this Northumbrian cousin of mine become a crony of Lady Ashton, the Keeper's wife, or, I may say, the Lord Keeper's Lady Keeper, and she has favoured Lady Blenkensop with a visit on her return from London, and is just now at her old mansion-house

on the banks of the Wansbeck. Now, sir, as it has been the use and wont of these ladies to consider their husbands as of no importance in the management of their own families, it has been their present pleasure, without consulting Sir William Ashton, to put on the *tapis* a matrimonial alliance, to be concluded between Lucy Ashton and my own right honourable self, Lady Ashton acting as self-constituted plenipotentiary on the part of her daughter and husband, and Mother Blenkensop, equally unaccredited, doing me the honour to be my representative. You may suppose I was a little astonished when I found that a treaty, in which I was so considerably interested, had advanced a good way before I was even consulted."

"Capot me if I think that was according to the rules of the game," said his confidant; "and pray, what answer did you return?"

"Why, my first thought was to send the treaty to the devil, and the negocia-

tors along with it, for a couple of meddling old women; my next was to laugh very heartily; and my third and last was a settled opinion that the thing was reasonable, and would suit me well enough."

"Why, I thought you had never seen the wench but once—and then she had her riding-mask on—I am sure you told me so."

"Ay—but I liked her very well then. And Ravenswood's dirty usage of me—shutting me out of doors to dine with the lacqueys, because he had the Lord Keeper, forsooth, and his daughter, to be guests in his beggarly castle of starvation—D—n me, Craigengelt, if I ever forgive him till I play him as good a trick."

"No more you should, if you are a lad of mettle," said Craigengelt, the matter now taking a turn in which he could sympathize; "and if you carry this wench from him, it will break his heart."

"That it will not," said Bucklaw; "his heart is all steeled over with reason and

philosophy—things that you, Craigie, know nothing about more than myself, God help me—But it will break his pride though, and that's what I'm driving at."

"Distance me," said Craigengelt, "but I know the reason now of his unmannerly behaviour at his old tumble-down tower yonder—Ashamed of your company?—no, no!—Gad, he was afraid you would cut in and carry off the girl."

"Eh! Craigengelt?" said Bucklaw—"do you really think so?—but no, no!—he is a devilish deal prettier man than I am."

"Who—he?" exclaimed the parasite—"he is as black as the crook; and for his size—he's a tall fellow, to be sure—but give me a light, stout, middle-sized"——

"Plague on thee!" said Bucklaw, interrupting him, "and on me for listening to you!—you would say as much if I were hunch-backed. But as to Ravenswood—he has kept no terms with me—I'll keep

none with him—if I *can* win this girl from him, I *will* win her."

"Win her?—'sblood, you shall win her, point, quint, and quatorze, my king of trumps—you shall pique, repique, and capot him."

"Prithee, stop thy gambling cant for one instant," said Bucklaw. "Things have come thus far, that I have entertained the proposal of my kinswoman, agreed to the terms of jointure, amount of fortune, and so forth, and that the affair is to go forward when Lady Ashton comes down, for she takes her daughter and her son in her own hand. Now, they want me to send up a confidential person with some writings."

"By this good wine, I'll ride to the end of the world—the very gates of Jericho, and the judgment-seat of Prester John, for thee," ejaculated the Captain.

"Why, I believe you would do something for me, and a great deal for yourself. Now, any one could carry the writings;

but you will have a little more to do; you must contrive to drop out before my Lady Ashton, just as if it were a matter of little consequence, the residence of Ravenswood at her husband's house, and his close intercourse with Miss Ashton; and you may tell her, that all the country talks of a visit from the Marquis of A——, as it is supposed, to make up the match betwixt Ravenswood and her daughter. I should like to hear what she says to all this; for, rat me, if I have any idea of starting for the plate at all if Ravenswood is to win the race, and he has odds against me already."

"Never a bit—the wench has too much sense—and in that belief I drink her health a third time; and, were time and place fitting, I would drink it on bended knees, and he that would not pledge me, I would make his guts garter his stockings."

"Hark ye, Craigengelt; as you are going into the society of women of rank," said Bucklaw, "I'll thank you to forget

your strange blackguard oaths and damme's —I'll write to them, though, that you are a blunt untaught fellow."

"Ay, ay," replied Craigengelt; "a plain, blunt, honest, down-right soldier."

"Not too honest, nor too much of the soldier neither; but, such as thou art, it is my luck to need thee, for I must have spurs put to Lady Ashton's motions."

"I'll dash them up to the rowel-heads," said Craigengelt; "she shall come here at the gallop, like a cow chased by a whole nest of hornets, and her tail twisted over her rump like a cork-screw."

"And hear ye, Craigie," said Bucklaw; "your boots and doublet are good enough to drink in, as the man says in the play, but they are somewhat too greasy for tea-table service—prithee, get thyself a little better rigged-out, and here is to pay all charges."

"Nay, Bucklaw—on my soul, man—you use me ill—however," added Craigengelt, pocketting the money, "if you will

have me so far indebted to you, I must be conforming."

"Well, horse and away!" said the patron, "so soon as you have got your riding livery in trim. You may ride the black crop-ear—and hark ye, I'll make you a present of him to boot."

"I drink to the good luck of my mission," answered the ambassador, "in a half-pint bumper."

"I thank ye, Craigie, and pledge you—I see nothing against it but the father or the girl taking a tantrum, and I am told the mother can wind them both round her little finger. Take care not to affront her with any of your jacobite jargon."

"O ay, true—she is a whig, and a friend of old Sall of Marlborough—thank my stars, I can hoist any colours at a pinch. I have fought as hard under John Churchill as ever I did under Dundee or the Duke of Berwick."

"I verily believe you, Craigie," said the lord of the mansion; "but, Craigie, do

you, pray, step down to the cellar and fetch us up a bottle of the Burgundy, 1678—it is in the fourth bin from the right-hand turn—And I say, Craigie—you may fetch up half-a-dozen whilst you are about it—Egad, we'll make a night on't."

CHAPTER VIII.

And soon they spied the merry-men green,
And eke the coach and four.

Duke upon Duke.

Craigengelt set forth on his mission, so soon as his equipage was complete, prosecuted his journey with all diligence, and accomplished his commission with all the dexterity for which Bucklaw had given him credit. As he arrived with credentials from Mr Hayston of Bucklaw, he was extremely welcome to both ladies; and those who are prejudiced in favour of a new acquaintance can, for a time at least, discover excellencies in his very faults, and perfections in his deficiencies. Although both ladies were accustomed to

good society, yet, being predetermined to find out an agreeable and well-behaved gentleman in Mr Hayston's friend, they succeeded wonderfully in imposing on themselves. It is true that Craigengelt was now handsomely dressed, and that was a point of no small consequence. But independent of outward shew, his blackguard impudence of address was construed into honourable bluntness, becoming his supposed military profession; his hectoring passed for courage, and his sauciness for wit. Lest, however, any one should think this a violation of probability, we must add, in fairness to the two ladies, that their discernment was greatly blinded, and their favour propitiated, by the opportune arrival of Captain Craigengelt, in the moment when they were longing for a third hand to make a party at tredrille, in which, as in all games, whether of chance or skill, that worthy person was a great proficient.

When he found himself established in favour, his next point was how best to

use it for the furtherance of his patron's views. He found Lady Ashton prepossessed strongly in favour of the motion, which Lady Blenkensop, partly from regard to her kinswoman, partly from the spirit of match-making, had not hesitated to propose to her; so that his task was an easy one. Bucklaw, reformed from his prodigality, was just the sort of husband which she desired to have for her Shepherdess of Lammermoor; and while the marriage gave her fortune, and a gentleman for her husband, Lady Ashton was of opinion that her destinies would be fully and most favourably accomplished. It so chanced, also, that Bucklaw, among his new acquisitions, had gained the management of a little political interest in a neighbouring county, where the Douglas family originally held large possessions. It was one of the bosom-hopes of Lady Ashton, that her eldest son, Sholto, should represent this county in the British Parliament, and she saw this alliance with Buck-

law as a circumstance which might be highly favourable to her wishes.

Craigengelt, who in his way by no means wanted sagacity, no sooner discovered in what quarter the wind of Lady Ashton's wishes sate, than he trimmed his course accordingly. "There was little to prevent Bucklaw himself from sitting for the county—he must carry the heat—must walk the course. Two cousins-german—six more distant kinsmen, his factor and his chamberlain, were all hollow votes—and the Girninghame interest had always carried, betwixt love and fear, about as many more—But Bucklaw cared no more about riding the first horse, and that sort of thing, than he, Craigengelt, did about a game at birkie—it was a pity his interest was not in good guidance."

All this Lady Ashton drank in with willing and attentive ears, resolving internally to be herself the person who should take the management of the political influence of her destined son-in-law, for the

benefit of her eldest born, Sholto, and all other parties concerned.

When he found her ladyship thus favourably disposed, the Captain proceeded, to use his employer's phrase, to set spurs to her resolution, by hinting at the situation of matters at Ravenswood Castle, the long residence which the heir of that family had made with the Lord Keeper, and the reports which (though he would be d—d ere he gave credit to any of them) had been idly circulated in the neighbourhood. It was not the Captain's cue to appear himself to be uneasy on the subject of these rumours; but he easily saw from Lady Ashton's flushed cheek, hesitating voice, and flashing eye, that she had caught the alarm which he intended to communicate. She had not heard from her husband so often or so regularly as she thought him bound in duty to have written, and of this very interesting intelligence, concerning his visit to the Tower of Wolf's Crag, and the guest, whom, with

such cordiality, he had received at Ravenswood Castle, he had suffered his lady to remain altogether ignorant, until she now learned it by the chance information of a stranger. Such concealment approached, in her apprehension, to a misprision, at least, of treason, if not to actual rebellion against her matrimonial authority; and in her inward soul did she swear to take vengeance on the Lord Keeper, as on a subject detected in meditating revolt. Her indignation burned the more fiercely, as she found herself obliged to suppress it in presence of Lady Blenkensop, the kinswoman, and of Craigengelt, the confidential friend of Bucklaw, of whose alliance she now became trebly desirous, since it occurred to her alarmed imagination, that her husband might, in his policy or timidity, prefer that of Ravenswood.

The Captain was engineer enough to discover that the train was fired; and therefore heard, in the course of the same day, without the least surprise, that Lady

Ashton had resolved to abridge her visit to Lady Blenkensop, and set forth with the peep of morning on her return to Scotland, using all the dispatch which the state of the roads, and the mode of travelling, would possibly permit.

Unhappy Lord Keeper!—little was he aware what a storm was travelling towards him in all the speed with which an old-fashioned coach and six could possibly achieve its journey. He, like Don Gayferos, "forgot his lady fair and true," and was only anxious about the expected visit of the Marquis of A——. Soothfast tidings had assured him that this nobleman was at length, and without fail, to honour his castle at one in the afternoon, being a late dinner hour; and much was the bustle in consequence of the annunciation. The Lord Keeper traversed the chambers, held consultation with the butler in the cellars, and even ventured, at the risk of a *demêlée* with a cook, of a spirit lofty enough to scorn the admonitions of Lady Ashton

herself, to peep into the kitchen. Satisfied, at length, that every thing was in as active a train of preparation as was possible, he summoned Ravenswood and his daughter to walk upon the terrace, for the purpose of watching, from that commanding position, the earliest symptoms of his Lordship's approach. For this purpose, with slow and idle step, he paraded the terrace, which, flanked with a heavy stone battlement, stretched in front of the castle upon a level with the first storey; while visitors found access to the court by a projecting gate-way, the bartizan or flat-leaded roof of which was accessible from the terrace by an easy flight of low and broad steps. The whole bore a resemblance partly to a castle, partly to a nobleman's seat; and though calculated, in some respects, for defence, evinced that it had been constructed under a sense of the power and security of the ancient Lords of Ravenswood.

This pleasant walk commanded a beau-

tiful and extensive view. But what was most to our present purpose, there were seen from the terrace two roads, one leading from the east, and one from the westward, which, crossing a ridge opposed to the eminence on which the castle stood, at different angles, gradually approached each other, until they joined not far from the gate of the avenue. It was to the westward approach that the Lord Keeper, from a sort of fidgetting anxiety, his daughter, from complaisance to him, and Ravenswood, though feeling some symptoms of internal impatience, out of complaisance to his daughter, directed their eyes to see the precursors of the Marquis's approach.

These were not long of presenting themselves. Two running footmen, dressed in white, with black jockey-caps, and long staffs in their hands, headed the train; and such was their agility, that they found no difficulty in keeping the necessary advance, which the etiquette of their station required, before the carriage and horsemen.

Onwards they came at a long swinging trot, arguing unwearied speed in their long-breathed calling. Such running footmen are often alluded to in old plays, (I would particularly instance "Middleton's Mad World my Masters,") and perhaps may be still remembered by some old persons in Scotland, as part of the retinue of the ancient nobility when travelling in full ceremony.* Behind these glancing meteors,

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* Hereupon I, Jedediah Cleishbotham, crave leave to remark, *primo,* which signifies, in the first place, that, having in vain enquired at the Circulating Library in Ganderscleugh, albeit it aboundeth in similar vanities, for this samyn Middleton and his Mad World, it was at length shewn unto me amongst other ancient fooleries carefully compiled by one Dodsley, who, doubtless, hath his reward for neglect of precious time; and having misused so much of mine as was necessary for the purpose, I therein found that a playman is brought in as a footman, whom a knight is made to greet facetiously with the epithet of "linen stocking, and three-score miles a day."

Secundo, (which is secondly in the vernacular,) under Mr Pattieson's favour, some men not altogether so

who footed it as if the Avenger of Blood had been behind them, came a cloud of dust, raised by riders who preceded, attended, or followed, the state-carriage of the Marquis.

The privilege of nobility, in these days, had something in it impressive on the imagination. The dresses and liveries and number of their attendants, their style of travelling, the imposing, and almost warlike air of the armed men who surrounded

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old as he would represent them, do remember this species of menial, or fore-runner. In evidence of which, I, Jedediah Cleishbotham, though mine eyes yet do me good service, remember me to have seen one of this tribe clothed in white, and bearing a staff, who ran daily before the state-coach of the umquhile John, Earl of Hopeton, father of this Earl, Charles, that now is; unto whom it may be justly said, that Renown playeth the part of a running footman, or precursor; and, as the poet singeth—

> "Mars standing by asserts his quarrel,
> And Fame flies after with a laurel."

J. C.

them, placed them far above the laird, who travelled with his brace of footmen; and as to rivalry from the mercantile part of the community, these would as soon have thought of imitating the state equipage of the Sovereign. At present it is different; and I myself, Peter Pattieson, in a late journey to Edinburgh, had the honour, in the mail-coach phrase, to "change a leg" with a peer of the realm. It was not so in the days of which I write; and the Marquis's approach, so long expected in vain, now took place in the full pomp of ancient aristocracy. Sir William Ashton was so much interested in what he beheld, and in considering the ceremonial of reception in case any circumstance had been omitted, that he scarce heard his son Henry exclaim, "there is another coach and six coming down the east road, papa —will they both belong to the Marquis of A——?"

At length, when the youngster had fair-

ly compelled his attention by pulling his sleeve,

> "He turned his eyes, and, as he turn'd, survey'd
> An awful vision."——

Sure enough, another coach and six, with four servants or out-riders in attendance, was descending the hill from the eastward, at such a pace as made it doubtful which of the carriages thus approaching from distant quarters should first reach the gate at the extremity of the avenue. The one coach was green, the other blue; and not the green and blue chariots in the Circus of Rome or Constantinople excited more turmoil among the citizens than the double apparition occasioned in the mind of the Lord Keeper. We all remember the terrible exclamation of the dying profligate, when a friend, to destroy what he supposed the hypochondriac idea of a spectre appearing in a certain shape at a given hour, placed before him a person

dressed up in the manner he described. "*Mon Dieu!*" said the expiring sinner, who, it seems, saw both the real and polygraphic apparition—"*Il y en est deux!*"

The surprise of the Lord Keeper was scarcely less unpleasing at the duplication of the expected arrival; his mind misgave him strangely. There was no neighbour who would have approached so unceremoniously, at a time when ceremony was held in such respect. It must be Lady Ashton, said his conscience, and followed up the hint with an anxious anticipation of the purpose of her sudden and unannounced return. He felt that he was caught "in the manner." That the company in which she had so unluckily surprised him was likely to be highly distasteful to her, there was no question; and the only hope which remained for him was her high sense of dignified propriety, which, he trusted, might prevent a public explosion. But so active were his doubts and

fears, as altogether to derange his purposed ceremonial for the reception of the Marquis.

These feelings of apprehension were not confined to Sir William Ashton. "It is my mother—it is my mother," said Lucy, turning as pale as ashes, and clasping her hands together as she looked at Ravenswood.

"And if it be Lady Ashton," said her lover to her in a low tone, "what can be the occasion of such alarm?—Surely the return of a lady to the family from which she has been so long absent, should excite other sensations than those of fear and dismay."

"You do not know my mother," said Miss Ashton, in a tone almost breathless with terror; "what will she say when she sees you in this place!"

"My stay is too long," said Ravenswood somewhat haughtily, "if her displeasure at my presence is like to be so formidable. My dear Lucy," he resumed, in a tone of

soothing encouragement, "you are too childishly afraid of Lady Ashton; she is a woman of family—a lady of fashion—a person who must know the world, and what is due to her husband and her husband's guests."

Lucy shook her head; and, as if her mother, still at the distance of half a mile, could have seen and scrutinized her deportment, she withdrew herself from beside Ravenswood, and, taking her brother Henry's arm, led him to a different part of the terrace. The Keeper also shuffled down towards the portal of the great gate, without inviting Ravenswood to accompany him, and thus he remained standing alone on the terrace, deserted and shunned, as it were, by the inhabitants of the mansion.

This suited not the mood of one who was proud in proportion to his poverty, and who thought that, in sacrificing his deep-rooted resentments so far as to become Sir William Ashton's guest, he conferred a favour, and received none. "I

can forgive Lucy," he said to himself; "she is young, timid, and conscious of an important engagement assumed without her mother's sanction; yet she should remember with whom it has been assumed, and leave me no reason to suspect that she is ashamed of her choice. For the Keeper, sense, spirit, and expression seem to have left his face and manner since he had the first glimpse of Lady Ashton's carriage. I must watch how this is to end; and, if they give me reason to think myself an unwelcome guest, my visit is soon abridged."

With these suspicions floating on his mind he left the terrace, and, walking towards the stables of the castle, gave directions that his horse should be kept in readiness, in case he should have occasion to ride abroad.

In the meanwhile the drivers of the two carriages, the approach of which had occasioned so much dismay at the castle, had become aware of each other's presence as they approached upon different lines to the

head of the avenue, as a common centre. Lady Ashton's driver and postillions instantly received orders to get foremost, if possible, her ladyship being desirous of dispatching her first interview with her husband before the arrival of these guests, whoever they might happen to be. On the other hand, the coachman of the Marquis, conscious of his own dignity and that of his master, and observing the rival charioteer was mending his pace, resolved, like a true brother of the whip, whether ancient or modern, to vindicate his right of precedence. So that, to increase the confusion of the Lord Keeper's understanding, he saw the short time which remained for consideration abridged by the haste of the contending coachmen, who, fixing their eyes sternly on each other, and applying the lash smartly to their horses, began to thunder down the descent with emulous rapidity, while the horsemen who attended them were forced to put on to a hand gallop.

Sir William's only chance now remain-

ing was the possibility of an overturn, and that his lady or visitor might break their necks. I am not aware that he formed any distinct wish on the subject, but I have no reason to think that his grief in either case would have been altogether inconsolable. This chance, however, also disappeared; for Lady Ashton, though insensible to fear, began to see the ridicule of running a race with a visitor of distinction, the goal being the portal of her own castle, and commanded her coachman, as they approached the avenue, to slacken his pace, and allow precedence to the stranger's equipage, a command which he gladly obeyed, as coming in time to save his honour, the horses of the Marquis's carriage being better, or, at least, fresher than his own. He restrained his speed, therefore, and suffered the green coach to enter the avenue, with all its retinue, which pass it occupied with the speed of a whirlwind. The Marquis's laced charioteer no sooner

found the *pas d'avance* was granted to him, than he resumed a more deliberate pace, at which he advanced under the embowering shade of the lofty elms, surrounded by all the attendants; while the carriage of Lady Ashton followed still more slowly at some distance.

In the front of the castle, and beneath the portal which admitted guests into the inner court, stood Sir William Ashton, much perplexed in mind, his younger son and daughter beside him, and in their rear a train of attendants of various ranks, in and out of livery. The nobility and gentry of Scotland, at this period, were remarkable even to extravagance for the number of their servants, whose services were easily purchased in a country where men were numerous beyond proportion to the means of employing them.

The manners of a man, trained like Sir William Ashton, are too much at his command to remain long disconcerted with the

most adverse concurrence of circumstances. He received the Marquis, as he alighted from his equipage, with the usual compliments of welcome; and, as he ushered him into the great hall, expressed his hope that his journey had been pleasant. The Marquis was a tall, well-made man, with a thoughtful and intelligent countenance, and an eye, in which the fire of ambition had for some years replaced the vivacity of youth; a bold, proud, expression of countenance, yet chastened by habitual caution, and the desire which, as the head of a party, he necessarily entertained of acquiring popularity. He answered with courtesy the courteous enquiries of the Lord Keeper, and was formally presented to Miss Ashton, in the course of which ceremony the Lord Keeper gave the first symptom of what was chiefly occupying his mind, by introducing his daughter as "his wife, Lady Ashton."

Lucy blushed; the Marquis looked sur-

prised at the extremely juvenile appearance of his hostess, and the Lord Keeper with difficulty rallied himself so far as to explain. "I should have said my daughter, my lord; but the truth is, that I saw Lady Ashton's carriage enter the avenue shortly after your lordship's, and"——

"Make no apology, my lord," replied his noble guest; "let me entreat you will wait on your lady, and leave me to cultivate Miss Ashton's acquaintance. I am shocked my people should have taken precedence of our hostess at her own gate; but your lordship is aware, that I supposed Lady Ashton was still in the south. Permit me to beseech you will waive ceremony, and hasten to welcome her."

This was precisely what the Lord Keeper longed to do; and he instantly profited by his lordship's obliging permission. To see Lady Ashton, and encounter the first burst of her displeasure in private, might prepare her, in some degree, to receive her unwel-

come guests with due decorum. As her carriage, therefore, stopped, the arm of the attentive husband was ready to assist Lady Ashton in dismounting. Looking as if she saw him not, she put his arm aside, and requested that of Captain Craigengelt, who stood by the coach with his laced hat under his arm, having acted as *cavaliere serviente*, or squire in attendance, during the journey. Taking hold of this respectable person's arm as if to support her, Lady Ashton traversed the court, uttering a word or two by way of direction to the servants, but not one to Sir William, who in vain endeavoured to attract her attention, as he rather followed than accompanied her into the hall, in which they found the Marquis in close conversation with the Master of Ravenswood: Lucy had taken the first opportunity of escaping. There was embarrassment on every countenance except that of the Marquis of A——, for even Craigengelt's impudence was hardly able to veil his fear of Ravenswood, and the

rest felt the awkwardness of the position in which they were thus unexpectedly placed.

After waiting a moment to be presented by Sir William Ashton, the Marquis resolved to introduce himself. "The Lord Keeper," he said, bowing to Lady Ashton, "has just introduced to me his daughter as his wife—he might very easily present Lady Ashton as his daughter, so little does she differ from what I remember her some years since—Will she permit an old acquaintance the privilege of a guest?"

He saluted the lady with too good a grace to apprehend a repulse, and then proceeded—"This, Lady Ashton, is a peace-making visit, and therefore I presume to introduce my cousin, the young Master of Ravenswood, to your favourable notice."

Lady Ashton could not chuse but courtesy; but there was in her obeisance an air of haughtiness approaching to contemptuous repulse. Ravenswood could not

chuse but bow; but his manner returned the scorn with which he had been greeted.

"Allow me," she said, "to present to your lordship *my* friend." Craigengelt, with the forward impudence which men of his cast mistake for ease, made a sliding bow to the Marquis, which he graced by a flourish of his gold-laced hat. The lady turned to her husband—"You and I, Sir William," she said, and these were the first words she had addressed to him, "have acquired new acquaintances since we parted—let me introduce the acquisition I have made to mine—Captain Craigengelt."

Another bow, and another flourish of the gold-laced hat, which was returned by the Lord Keeper without intimation of former recognition, and with that sort of anxious readiness, which intimated his wish, that peace and amnesty should take place betwixt the contending parties, including the auxiliaries on both sides. "Let me introduce you to the Master of Ravenswood,"

said he to Captain Craigengelt, following up the same amicable system. But the Master drew up his tall form to the full extent of his height, and without so much as looking towards the person thus introduced to him, he said, in a marked tone, "Captain Craigengelt and I are already perfectly well acquainted with each other."

"Perfectly—perfectly," replied the Captain, in a mumbling tone, like that of a double echo, and with a flourish of his hat, the circumference of which was greatly abridged, compared with those which had so cordially graced his introduction to the Marquis and the Lord Keeper.

Lockhard, followed by three menials, now entered with wine and refreshments, which it was the fashion to offer as a whet before dinner; and when they were placed before the guests, Lady Ashton made an apology for withdrawing her husband from them for some minutes upon business of special import. The Marquis, of course, requested her ladyship would lay herself

under no restraint; and Craigengelt, bolting with speed a second glass of racy canary, hastened to leave the room, feeling no great pleasure in the prospect of being left alone with the Marquis of A—— and the Master of Ravenswood; the presence of the former holding him in awe, and that of the latter in bodily terror.

Some arrangements about his horse and baggage formed the pretext for his sudden retreat, in which he persevered, although Lady Ashton gave Lockhard orders to be careful most particularly to accommodate Captain Craigengelt with all the attendance which he could possibly require. The Marquis and the Master of Ravenswood were thus left to communicate to each other their remarks upon the reception which they had met with, while Lady Ashton led the way, and her lord followed somewhat like a condemned criminal, to her ladyship's dressing-room.

So soon as the spouses had both entered, her ladyship gave way to that fierce audaci-

ty of temper, which she had with difficulty suppressed, out of respect to appearances. She shut the door behind the alarmed Lord Keeper, took the key out of the spring-lock, and with a countenance which years had not bereft of its haughty charms, and eyes which spoke at once resolution and resentment, she addressed her astounded husband in these words:—"My lord, I am not greatly surprised at the connections you have been pleased to form during my absence—they are entirely in conformity with your birth and breeding; and if I did expect any thing else, I heartily own my error, and that I merit, by having done so, the disappointment you had prepared for me."

"My dear Lady Ashton—my dear Eleanor," said the Lord Keeper, "listen to reason for a moment, and I will convince you I have acted with all the regard due to the dignity, as well as the interest of my family."

"To the interest of *your* family I con-

ceive you perfectly capable of attending," returned the indignant lady, " and even to the dignity of your family also—But as mine happens to be inextricably involved with it, you will excuse me if I chuse to give my own attention so far as that is concerned."

" What would you have, Lady Ashton?" said the husband—" What is it that displeases you? Why is it, that on your return after so long an absence, I am arraigned in this manner?"

" Ask your own conscience, Sir William, what has prompted you to become a renegade to your political party and opinions, and led you, for what I know, to be on the point of marrying your only daughter to a beggarly jacobite bankrupt, the inveterate enemy of your family to the boot."

" Why, what, in the name of common sense and common civility, would you have me do, madam?" answered her husband—" Is it possible for me, with ordinary decency, to turn a young gentleman out of

my house, who saved my daughter's life and my own, but the other morning as it were?"

"Saved your life! I have heard of that story," said the lady—"the Lord Keeper was scared by a dun cow, and he takes the young fellow who killed her for Guy of Warwick—any butcher from Haddington may soon have an equal claim on your hospitality."

"Lady Ashton," stammered the Keeper, "this is intolerable—and when I am desirous, too, to make you easy by any sacrifice—if you would but tell me what you would be at."

"Go down to your guests," said the imperious dame, "and make your apology to Ravenswood, that the arrival of Captain Craigengelt and some other friends, renders it impossible for you to offer him lodgings at the castle—I expect young Mr Hayston of Bucklaw."

"Good Heavens, madam!" ejaculated her husband—"Ravenswood to give place

to Craigengelt, a common gambler and an informer !—it was all I could do to forbear desiring the fellow to get out of my house, and I was much surprised to see him in your ladyship's train."

"Since you saw him there, you might be well assured," answered this meek helpmate, "that he was proper society. As to this Ravenswood, he only meets with the treatment which, to my certain knowledge, he gave to a much valued friend of mine, who had the misfortune to be his guest some time since. But take your resolution ; for, if Ravenswood does not quit the house, I will."

Sir William Ashton paced up and down the apartment in the most distressing agitation, fear, and shame, and anger contending against the habitual deference he was in the use of rendering to his lady. At length it ended, as is usual with timid minds placed in such circumstances, in his adopting a *mezzo-termine*, a middle measure.

"I tell you frankly, madam, I neither can nor will be guilty of the incivility you propose to the Master of Ravenswood—he has not deserved it at my hand. If you will be so unreasonable as to insult a man of quality under your own roof, I cannot prevent you, but I will not at least be the agent in such a preposterous proceeding."

"You will not?" asked the lady.

"No, by Heavens, madam," her husband replied; "ask me anything congruent with common decency, as to drop his acquaintance by degrees, or the like—but to bid him leave my house, is what I will not, and cannot consent to."

"Then the task of supporting the honour of the family will fall on me, as it has often done before," said the lady.

She sat down, and hastily wrote a few lines. The Lord Keeper made another effort to prevent her taking a step so decisive, just as she opened the door to call her female attendant from the anti-room. "Think what you are doing, Lady Ash-

ton—you are making a mortal enemy of a young man, who is like to have the means of harming us"——

"Did you ever know a Douglas who feared an enemy?" answered the lady contemptuously.

"Ay, but he is as proud and vindictive as an hundred Douglasses, and an hundred devils to boot. Think of it for a night only."

"Not for another moment," answered the lady;—"here, Mrs Patullo, give this billet to young Ravenswood."

"To the Master, madam?" said Mrs Patullo.

"Ay, to the Master, if you call him so."

"I wash my hands of it entirely," said the Keeper; "and I shall go down into the garden, and see that Jardine gathers the winter fruit for the dessert."

"Do so," said the lady, looking after him with looks of infinite contempt; "and thank God that you leave one behind you

as fit to protect the honour of the family, as you are to look after pippins and pears."

The Lord Keeper remained long enough in the garden to give her ladyship's mine time to explode, and to let, as he thought, at least the first violence of Ravenswood's displeasure blow over. When he entered the hall, he found the Marquis of A—— giving orders to some of his attendants. He seemed in high displeasure, and interrupted an apology which Sir William had commenced, for having left his lordship alone.

"I presume, Sir William, you are no stranger to this singular billet with which my kinsman of Ravenswood (an emphasis on the word *my*) has been favoured by your lady—and, of course, that you are prepared to receive my adieus—My kinsman is already gone, having thought it unnecessary to offer any on his part, since all former civilities have been cancelled by this singular insult."

"I protest, my lord," said Sir William,

holding the billet in his hand, "I am not privy to the contents of this letter. I know Lady Ashton is a warm-tempered and prejudiced woman, and I am sincerely sorry for any offence that has been given or taken; but I hope your lordship will consider that a lady"——

"Should bear herself towards persons of a certain rank with the breeding of one," said the Marquis, completing the half-uttered sentence.

"True, my lord," said the unfortunate Keeper; "but Lady Ashton is still a woman"——

"And as such, methinks," said the Marquis, again interrupting him, "should be taught the duties which correspond to her station. But here she comes, and I will learn from her own mouth the reason of this extraordinary and unexpected affront offered to my near relation, while both he and I were her ladyship's guests."

Lady Ashton accordingly entered the apartment at this moment. Her dispute

with Sir William, and a subsequent interview with her daughter, had not prevented her from attending to the duties of her toilette. She appeared in full dress; and, from the character of her countenance and manner, well became the splendour with which ladies of quality then appeared on such occasions.

The Marquis of A—— bowed haughtily, and she returned the salute with equal pride and distance of demeanour. He then took from the passive hand of Sir William Ashton the billet he had given him the moment before he approached the lady, and was about to speak, when she interrupted him. "I perceive, my lord, you are about to enter upon an unpleasant subject. I am sorry any such should have occurred at this time, to interrupt, in the slightest degree, the respectful reception due to your lordship—but so it is.—Mr Edgar Ravenswood, for whom I have addressed the billet in your lordship's hand, has abused the hospitality of this family, and Sir Wil-

liam Ashton's softness of temper, in order to seduce a young person into engagements without her parents' consent, and of which they never can approve."

Both gentlemen answered at once,—"My kinsman is incapable"——said the Lord Marquis.

"I am confident that my daughter Lucy is still more incapable"——said the Lord Keeper.

Lady Ashton at once interrupted, and replied to them both,—"My Lord Marquis, your kinsman, if Mr Ravenswood has the honour to be so, has made this attempt privately to secure the affections of this young and inexperienced girl.—Sir William Ashton, your daughter has been simple enough to give more encouragement than she ought to have done to so very improper a suitor."

"And I think, madam," said the Lord Keeper, losing his accustomed temper and patience, "that if you had nothing better

to tell us, you had better have kept this family secret to yourself also."

"You will pardon me, Sir William," said the lady, calmly; "the noble Marquis has a right to know the cause of the treatment I have found it necessary to use to a gentleman whom he calls his blood-relation."

"It is a cause," muttered the Lord Keeper, "which has emerged since the effect has taken place; for, if it exists at all, I am sure she knew nothing of it when her letter to Ravenswood was written."

"It is the first time that I have heard of this," said the Marquis; "but since your ladyship has tabled a subject so delicate, permit me to say, that my kinsman's birth and connections entitled him to a patient hearing, and, at least, a civil refusal, even in case of his being so ambitious as to raise his eyes to the daughter of Sir William Ashton."

"You will recollect, my lord, of what

blood Miss Lucy Ashton is come by the mother's side," said the lady.

"I do remember your descent—from a younger branch of the house of Angus," said the Marquis—"and your ladyship—forgive me, lady—ought not to forget that the Ravenswoods have thrice intermarried with the main branch. Come, madam—I know how matters stand—old and long-fostered prejudices are difficult to get over—I make every allowance for them—I ought not, and I would not have suffered my kinsman to depart alone, expelled, in a manner, from this house—but I had hopes of being a mediator. I am still unwilling to leave you in anger—and shall not set forward till after noon, as I rejoin the Master of Ravenswood upon the road a few miles from hence. Let us talk over this matter more coolly."

"It is what I anxiously desire, my lord," said Sir William Ashton, eagerly. "Lady Ashton, we will not permit my Lord of A—— to leave us in displeasure.

We must compel him to tarry dinner at the castle."

"The castle," said the lady, "and all that it contains, are at the command of the Marquis, so long as he chuses to honour it with his residence—but touching the farther discussion of this disagreeable topic"——

"Pardon me, good madam," said the Marquis; "but I cannot allow you to express any hasty resolution on a subject so important. I see that more company is arriving; and since I have the good fortune to renew my former acquaintance with Lady Ashton, I hope she will give me leave to avoid perilling what I prize so highly upon any disagreeable subject of discussion—at least, till we have talked over more agreeable topics."

The lady smiled, courtsied, and gave her hand to the Marquis, by whom, with all the formal gallantry of the time, which did not permit the guest to tuck the lady of the house under the arm, as a rustic does

his sweetheart at a wake, she was ushered to the eating-room.

Here they were joined by Bucklaw, Craigengelt, and other neighbours, whom the Lord Keeper had previously invited to meet the Marquis of A——. An apology, founded upon a slight indisposition, was alleged as an excuse for the absence of Miss Ashton, whose seat appeared unoccupied. The entertainment was splendid to profusion, and was protracted till a late hour.

CHAPTER IX.

Such was our fallen father's fate,
Yet better than mine own;
He shared his exile with his mate,
I'm banished forth alone.

WALLER.

I WILL not attempt to describe the mixture of indignation and regret with which Ravenswood left the seat which had belonged to his ancestors. The terms in which Lady Ashton's billet was couched rendered it impossible for him, without being deficient in that spirit of which he perhaps had too much, to remain an instant longer within its walls. The Marquis, who had his share in the affront, was, nevertheless, still willing to make some ef-

forts at conciliation. He therefore suffered his kinsman to depart alone, making him promise, however, that he would wait for him at the small inn called the Tod's-hole, situated, as our readers may be pleased to recollect, half way betwixt Ravenswood Castle and Wolf's Crag, and about five Scottish miles distant from each. Here the Marquis proposed to join the Master of Ravenswood, either that night or the next morning. His own feelings would have induced him to have left the castle directly, but he was loth to forfeit, without at least one effort, the advantages which he had proposed from his visit to the Lord Keeper; and the Master of Ravenswood was, even in the very heat of his resentment, unwilling to foreclose any chance of reconciliation which might arise out of the partiality which Sir William Ashton had shewn towards him, as well as the intercessory arguments of his noble kinsman. He himself departed without a mo-

ment's delay, farther than was necessary to make this arrangement.

At first he spurred his horse at a quick pace through an avenue of the park, as if, by rapidity of motion, he could stupify the confusion of feelings with which he was assailed. But as the road grew wilder and more sequestered, and when the trees had hidden the turrets of the castle, he gradually slackened his pace, as if to indulge the painful reflections which he had in vain endeavoured to repress. The path in which he found himself led him to the Mermaiden's Fountain, and to the cottage of Alice; and the fatal influence which superstitious belief attached to the former spot, as well as the admonitions which had been in vain offered to him by the inhabitant of the latter, forced themselves upon his memory. "Old saws speak truth," he said to himself; "and the Mermaiden's Well has indeed witnessed the last act of rashness of the heir of Ravenswood.—

Alice spoke well," he continued, "and I am in the situation which she foretold—or rather I am more deeply dishonoured—not the dependent and ally of the destroyer of my father's house, as the old sybil presaged, but the degraded wretch, who has aspired to hold that subordinate character, and has been rejected with disdain."

We are bound to tell the tale as we have received it; and, considering the distance of the time, and propensity of those through whose mouths it has passed to the marvellous, this could not be called a Scottish story, unless it manifested a tinge of Scottish superstition. As Ravenswood approached the solitary fountain, he is said to have met with the following singular adventure:—His horse, which was moving slowly forward, suddenly interrupted its steady and composed pace, snorted, reared, and, though urged by the spur, refused to proceed, as if some object of terror had suddenly presented itself. On looking to the fountain, Ra-

venswood discerned a female figure, dressed in a white, or rather greyish mantle, placed on the very spot on which Lucy Ashton had reclined while listening to the fatal tale of love. His immediate impression was, that she had conjectured by which path he would traverse the park on his departure, and placed herself at this well-known and sequestered place of rendezvous, to indulge her own sorrow and his in a parting interview. In this belief he jumped from his horse, and, making its bridle fast to a tree, walked hastily towards the fountain, pronouncing eagerly, yet under his breath, the words, "Miss Ashton!—Lucy!"

The figure turned as he addressed it, and displayed to his wondering eyes the features, not of Lucy Ashton, but of old blind Alice. The singularity of her dress, which rather resembled a shroud than the garment of a living woman—the appearance of her person, larger, as it struck him, than it

usually seemed to be—above all, the strange circumstance of a blind, infirm, and decrepit person being found at a distance from her habitation, (considerable if her infirmities be taken into account,) combined to impress him with a feeling of wonder approaching to fear. As he approached, she arose from her seat, held her shrivelled hand up as if to prevent his coming more near, and her withered lips moved fast, although no sound issued from them. Ravenswood stopped; and as, after a moment's pause, he again advanced towards her, Alice, or her apparition, moved or glided backwards towards the thicket, still keeping her face turned towards him. The trees soon hid the form from his sight; and, yielding to the strong and terrific impression that the being which he had seen was not of this world, the Master of Ravenswood remained rooted to the ground whereon he had stood when he caught his last view of her. At length, summoning up his courage, he advanced to the spot

on which the figure had seemed to be seated; but neither was there pressure of the grass, nor any other circumstance, to induce him to believe that what he had seen was real and substantial.

Full of those strange thoughts and confused apprehensions which awake in the bosom of one who conceives he has witnessed some preternatural appearance, the Master of Ravenswood walked back towards his horse, frequently however looking behind him, not without apprehension, as if expecting that the vision would reappear. But the apparition, whether it was real, or whether it was the creation of a heated and agitated imagination, returned not again; and he found his horse sweating and terrified, as if experiencing that agony of fear, with which the presence of a supernatural being is supposed to agitate the brute creation. The Master mounted, and rode slowly forward, soothing his horse from time to time, while the animal seemed internally to shrink and shudder,

as if expecting some new object of fear at the opening of every glade. The rider, after a moment's consideration, resolved to investigate the matter further. "Can my eyes have deceived me," he said, "and deceived me for such a space of time?—Or are this woman's infirmities but feigned, in order to excite compassion?—And even then, her motion resembled not that of a living and existing person. Must I adopt the popular creed, and think that the unhappy being has formed a league with the powers of darkness?—I am determined to be resolved—I will not brook imposition even from my own eyes."

In this uncertainty he rode up to the little wicket of Alice's garden. Her seat beneath the birch-tree was vacant, though the day was pleasant, and the sun was high. He approached the hut, and heard from within the sobs and wailing of a female. No answer was returned when he knocked, so that, after a moment's pause, he lifted the latch and entered. It was indeed a

house of solitude and sorrow. Stretched upon her miserable pallet lay the corpse of the last retainer of the house of Ravenswood, who still abode on their paternal domains. Life had but shortly departed; and the little girl by whom she had been attended in her last moments was wringing her hands and sobbing, betwixt childish fear and sorrow, over the body of her mistress.

The Master of Ravenswood had some difficulty to compose the terrors of the poor child, whom his unexpected appearance had at first rather appalled than comforted; and when he succeeded, the first expression which the girl used intimated that "he had come too late." Upon enquiring the meaning of this expression, he learned that the deceased, upon the first attack of the mortal agony, had sent a peasant to the castle to beseech an interview of the Master of Ravenswood, and had expressed the utmost impatience for his return. But the messengers of the

poor are tardy and negligent: the fellow had not reached the castle, as was afterwards learned, until Ravenswood had left it, and had then found too much amusement among the retinue of the strangers to return in any haste to the cottage of Alice. Meantime her anxiety of mind seemed to increase with the agony of her body; and, to use the phrase of Babie, her only attendant, "she prayed powerfully that she might see her master's son once more, and renew her warning." She died just as the clock in the distant village tolled one; and Ravenswood remembered, with internal shuddering, that he had heard the chime sound through the wood just before he had seen what he was now much disposed to consider as the spectre of the deceased.

It was necessary, as well from his respect to the departed as in common humanity to her terrified attendant, that he should take some measures to relieve the girl from her distressing situation. The deceased, he understood, had expressed a desire to be

buried in a solitary church-yard near the little inn of the Tod's-hole, called the Hermitage, or more commonly Armitage, in which lay interred some of the Ravenswood family, and many of their followers. Ravenswood conceived it his duty to gratify this predilection, so commonly found to exist among the Scottish peasantry, and dispatched Babie to the neighbouring village to procure the assistance of some females, assuring her that, in the meanwhile, he would himself remain with the dead body, which, as in Thessaly of old, it is accounted highly unfit to leave without a watch.

Thus, in the course of a quarter of an hour, or little more, he found himself sitting, a solitary guard over the inanimate corse of her, whose dismissed spirit, unless his eyes had strangely deceived him, had so shortly before manifested itself before him. Notwithstanding his natural courage, the Master was considerably affected by a concurrence of circumstances so extraordina-

ry. "She died expressing her eager desire to see me. Can it be, then,"—was his natural course of reflection—" can strong and earnest wishes, formed during the last agony of nature, survive its catastrophe, surmount the awful bounds of the spiritual world, and place before us its inhabitants in the hues and colouring of life?—And why was that manifested to the eye which could not unfold its tale to the ear?—and wherefore should a breach be made in the laws of nature, yet its purpose remain unknown?—Vain questions, which only death, when it shall make me like the pale and withered form before me, can ever resolve."

He laid a cloth, as he spoke, over the lifeless face, upon whose features he felt unwilling any longer to dwell. He then took his place in an old carved oaken chair, ornamented with his own armorial bearings, which Alice had contrived to appropriate to her own use in the pillage which took place among creditors, officers, domestics, and messengers of the law, when his father

left Ravenswood Castle for the last time. Thus seated, he banished, as much as he could, the superstitious feelings which the late incident naturally inspired. His own were sad enough, without the exaggerations of supernatural terror, since he found himself transferred from the situation of a successful lover of Lucy Ashton, and an honoured and respected friend of her father, into the melancholy and solitary guardian of the abandoned and forsaken corpse of a common pauper.

He was relieved, however, from his sad office sooner than he could reasonably have expected, from the distance betwixt the hut of the deceased and the village, and the age and infirmities of three old women, who came from thence, in military phrase, to relieve guard upon the body of the defunct. On any other occasion the speed of these reverend sybils would have been much more moderate, for the first was eighty years of age and upwards, the second was paralytic, and the third lame of a leg from some accident. But the burial duties ren-

dered to the deceased, are, to the Scottish peasant of either sex, a labour of love. I know not whether it is from the temper of the people, grave and enthusiastic as it certainly is, or from the recollection of the ancient catholic opinions, when the funeral rites were always considered as a period of festival to the living; but feasting, good cheer, and even inebriety, were, and are, the frequent accompaniments of a Scottish old-fashioned burial. What the funeral feast, or *dirgie*, as it is called, was to the men, the gloomy preparations of the dead body for the coffin were to the women. To straight the contorted limbs upon a board used for that melancholy purpose, to array the corpse in clean linen, and over that in its woollen shroud, were operations committed always to the old matrons of the village, and in which they found a singular and gloomy delight.

The old women paid the Master their salutations with a ghastly smile, which reminded him of the meeting betwixt Mac-

beth and the witches on the blasted heath of Forres. He gave them some money, and recommended to them the charge of the dead body of their contemporary, an office which they willingly undertook; intimating to him at the same time that he must leave the hut, in order that they might begin their mournful duties. Ravenswood readily agreed to depart, only tarrying to recommend to them due attention to the body, and to receive information where he was to find the sexton, or beadle, who had in charge the deserted church-yard of the Armitage, in order to prepare matters for the reception of old Alice in the place of repose which she had selected for herself.

"Ye'll no be pinched to find out Johnie Mortsheugh," said the elder sybil, and still her withered cheek bore a grisly smile—"he dwells near the Tod's-hole, an house of entertainment where there has been mony a blithe birling—for death and drink-draining are near neighbours to ane ani ther."

"Ay! and that's e'en true, cummer," said the lame hag, propping herself with a crutch which supported the shortness of her left leg, "for I mind when the father of this Master of Ravenswood that is now standing before us, sticked young Blackhall with his whinger, for a wrang word said ower their wine, or brandy, or what not—he gaed in as light as a lark, and he came out with his feet foremost. I was at the winding of the corpse; and when the bluid was washed off, he was a bonnie bouk of man's body."

It may be easily believed that this ill-timed anecdote hastened the Master's purpose of quitting a company so evil-omened and so odious. Yet, while walking to the tree to which his horse was tied, and busying himself with adjusting the girths of the saddle, he could not avoid hearing, through the hedge of the little garden, a conversation respecting himself, betwixt the lame woman and the octogenarian sybil. The pair had hobbled into the garden to gather

rosemary, southern-wood, rue, and other plants proper to be strewed upon the body, and burned by way of fumigation in the chimney of the cottage. The paralytic wretch, almost exhausted by the journey, was left guard upon the corpse, lest witches or fiends might play their sport with it.

The following low croaking dialogue was necessarily overheard by the Master of Ravenswood :—" That's a fresh and full-grown hemlock, Annie Winnie—mony a cummer lang syne wad hae sought nae better horse to flee over hill and how, through mist and moonlight, and light doun in the King of France's cellar."

" Ay, cummer! but the very de'il has turned as hard-hearted now as the Lord Keeper, and the grit folk that hae breasts like whin-stane. They prick us and they pine us, and they pit us on the pinny-winkles for witches; and, if I say my prayers backwards ten times ower, Satan will never gi'e me amends o' them."

" Did ye ever see the foul thief?" asked her neighbour.

"Na!" replied the other spokeswoman; "but I trow I hae dreamed of him mony a time, and I think the day will come they will burn me for't. But ne'er mind, cummer! we hae this dollar of the Master's, and we'll send doun for bread and for aill, and tobacco, and a drap brandy to burn, and a wee pickle saft sugar—and be there de'il, or nae de'il, lass, we'll hae a merry night o't."

Here her leathern chops uttered a sort of cackling ghastly laugh, resembling, to a certain degree, the cry of the screech-owl.

"He is a frank man, and a free-handed man, the Master," said Annie Winnie, "and a comely personage—broad in the shouthers, and narrow around the lungies—he wad mak a bonnie corpse—I wad like to hae the streaking and winding o' him."

"It is written on his brow, Annie Winnie," returned the octogenarian, her companion, "that hand of woman, or of man either, will never straught him—dead-deal

will never be laid to his back—make you your market of that, for I hae it frae a sure hand."

"Will it be his lot to die on the battle-ground then, Ailsie Gourlay?—Will he die by the sword or the ball, as his forbears hae dune before him mony ane o' them?"

"Ask nae mair questions about it—he'll no be graced sae far," replied the sage.

"I ken ye are wiser than ither folk, Ailsie Gourlay—But wha tell'd ye this?"

"Fashna your thumb about that, Annie Winnie," answered the sybil—"I hae it frae a hand sure aneugh."

"But ye said ye never saw the foul thief," reiterated her inquisitive companion.

"I hae it frae as sure a hand," said Ailsie, "and from them that spaed his fortune before the sark gaed ower his head."

"Hark! I hear his horse's feet riding off," said the other; "they dinna sound as if good luck was wi' them."

"Mak haste, sirs," cried the paralytic

hag from the cottage, "and let us do what is needfu', and say what is fitting; for, if the dead corpse binna straughted, it will girn and thraw, and that will fear the best of us."

Ravenswood was now out of hearing. He despised most of the ordinary prejudices about witchcraft, omens, and vaticination, to which his age and country still gave such implicit credit, that, to express a doubt of them, was accounted a crime equal to the unbelief of Jews or Saracens; he knew also that the prevailing belief concerning witches, operating upon the hypochondriac habits of those whom age, infirmity, and poverty rendered liable to suspicion, and enforced by the fear of death, and the pangs of the most cruel tortures, often extorted those confessions which encumber and disgrace the criminal records of Scotland during the seventeenth century. But the vision of that morning, whether real or imaginary, had impressed his mind with a superstitious feeling which

he in vain endeavoured to shake off. The nature of the business which awaited him at the little inn, called Tod's-hole, where he soon after arrived, was not of a kind to restore his spirits.

It was necessary he should see Mortsheugh, the sexton of the old burial-ground at Armitage, to arrange matters for the funeral of Alice; and as the man dwelt near the place of her late residence, the Master, after a slight refreshment, walked towards the place where the body of Alice was to be deposited. It was situated in the nook formed by the eddying sweep of a stream, which issued from the adjoining hills. A rude cavern in an adjacent rock, which, in the interior, was cut into the shape of a cross, formed the hermitage, where some Saxon saint had in ancient times done penance, and given name to the place. The rich Abbey of Coldinghame had, in latter days, established a chapel in the neighbourhood, of which no vestige was now visible, though the church-

yard which surrounded it, was still, as upon the present occasion, used for the interment of particular persons. One or two shattered yew-trees still grew within the precincts of that which had once been holy ground. Warriors and barons had been buried there of old, but their names were forgotten, and their monuments demolished. The only sepulchral memorials which remained, were the upright head-stones which mark the grave of persons of an inferior rank. The abode of the sexton was a solitary cottage adjacent to the ruined wall of the cemetery, but so low, and having its thatch, which nearly reached the ground, covered with such a crop of grass, fog, and house leeks, that it resembled an overgrown grave. On enquiry, however, Ravenswood found that the man of the last mattock was absent at a bridal, being fiddler as well as grave-digger to the vicinity. He therefore retired to the little inn, leaving a message that early next morning he would again call for the per-

son, whose double occupation connected him at once with the house of mourning and the house of feasting.

An outrider of the Marquis arrived at Tod's-hole shortly after, with a message intimating that his master would join Ravenswood at that place on the following morning; and the Master, who would otherwise have proceeded to his old retreat at Wolf's Crag, remained there accordingly, to give the meeting to his noble kinsman.

CHAPTER X.

Hamlet. Has this fellow no feeling of his business—he sings at grave making.

Horatio. Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

Hamlet. 'Tis e'en so, the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE sleep of Ravenswood was broken by ghastly and agitating visions, and his waking intervals disturbed by melancholy reflections on the past, and painful anticipations of the future. He was perhaps the only traveller who ever slept in that miserable kennel without complaining of his lodgings, or feeling inconveniences from their deficiencies. It is when "the mind is free the body's delicate." Morning, however, found the Master an early riser, in hopes that the fresh air of the dawn might afford the refreshment which night

had refused him. He took his way towards the solitary burial-ground, which lay about half a mile from the inn.

The thin blue smoke, which already began to curl upward, and to distinguish the cottage of the living from the habitation of the dead, apprized him that its inmate had returned and was stirring. Accordingly, on entering the little church-yard, he saw the old man labouring in a half-made grave. My destiny, thought Ravenswood, seems to lead me to scenes of fate and of death; but these are childish thoughts, and they shall not master me. I will not again suffer my imagination to beguile my senses. —The old man rested on his spade as the Master approached him, as if to receive his commands, and as he did not immediately speak, the sexton opened the discourse in his own way.

"Ye will be a wedding customer, sir, I'se warrant."

"What makes you think so, friend?" replied the Master.

"I live by twa trades, sir," replied the blythe old man; "fiddle, sir, and spade; filling the world, and emptying of it; and I suld ken baith cast of customers by headmark in thirty years practice."

"You are mistaken, however, this morning," replied Ravenswood.

"Am I?" said the old man, looking keenly at him, "troth and it may be; since, for as brent as your brow is, there is something sitting upon it this day, that is as near akin to death as to wedlock. Weel, weel, the pick and shovel are as ready to your order as bow and fiddle."

"I wish you," said Ravenswood, "to look after the decent interment of an old woman, Alice Gray, who lived at the Craigfoot in Ravenswood Park."

"Alice Gray! blind Alice!" said the sexton; "and is she gane at last? that's another jow of the bell to bid me be ready. I mind when Habbie Gray brought her down to this land; a likely lass she was then, and looked ower her southland nose at us a'. I

trow her pride got a downcome. And is she e'en gane?"

"She died yesterday," said Ravenswood; "and desired to be buried here, beside her husband; you will know where he lies, no doubt."

"Ken where he lies?" answered the sexton, with national indirection of response, "I ken where a' body lies, that lies here. But ye were speaking o' her grave?—Lord help us—it's no an ordinar grave that will haud her in, if a's true that folks said of Alice in her auld days; and if I gae to six feet deep, and a warlock's grave shouldna be an inch mair ebb, or her ain witch cummers would soon whirl her out of her shroud for a' their auld acquaintance—and be't six feet, or be't three, wha's to pay the making o't, I pray ye?"

"I will pay that, my friend, and all other reasonable charges."

"Reasonable charges?" said the sexton; "ou, there's ground-mail, and bell-siller,

(though the bell's broken nae doubt) and the kist, and my day's wark, and my bit fee, and some brandy and aill to the drigie—I am no thinking that you can inter her, to ca' decently, under saxteen pund Scots."

"There is the money, my friend," said Ravenswood, "and something over. Be sure you know the grave."

"Ye'll be ane o' her English relations, I'se warrant," said the hoary man of skulls; "I hae heard she married far below her station; it was very right to let her bite on the bridle when she was living, and its very right to gie her a decent burial now she's dead, for that's a matter o' credit to yoursell rather than to her. Folk may let their kindred shift for themsells when they are alive, and can bear the burthen of their ain misdoings; but it is an unnatural thing to let them be buried like dogs, when a' the discredit gangs to the kindred—what kens the dead corse about it?"

"You would not have people neglect their relations on a bridal occasion neither,"

said Ravenswood, who was amused with the professional limitation of the grave-digger's philanthropy.

The old man cast up his sharp grey eyes with a shrewd smile, as if he understood the jest, but instantly continued with his former gravity,—" Bridals—wha wad neglect bridals that had ony regard for plenishing the earth? To be sure, they suld be celebrated with all manner of good cheer, and meeting of friends, and musical instruments, harp, sackbut, and psaltery; or gude fiddle and pipes, when these auld-warld instruments of melody are hard to be compassed."

" The presence of the fiddle, I dare say," replied Ravenswood, " would atone for the absence of all the others."

The sexton again looked sharply up at him, as he answered, " Nae doubt—nae doubt—if it were weel played;—but yonder," he said, as if to change the discourse, " is Halbert Gray's lang hame, that ye were speering after, just the third bourock

beyond the muckle through-stane that stands on sax legs yonder, abune some ane of the Ravenswoods; for there is mony of their kin and followers here, de'il lift them! though it isna just their main burial-place."

"They are no favourites then of yours these Ravenswoods," said the Master, not much pleased with the passing benediction which was thus bestowed on his family and name.

"I ken na wha should favour them," said the grave-digger; "when they had lands and power, they were ill guides of them baith, and now their head's down, there's few care how lang they may be of lifting it again."

"Indeed!" said Ravenswood, "I never heard that this unhappy family deserved ill-will at the hands of their country. I grant their poverty—if that renders them contemptible."

"It will gang a far way till't," said the sexton of Hermitage, "ye may tak my word for that—at least, I ken naething else that suld

mak myself contemptible, and folk are far frae respecting me as they wad do if I lived in a twa-lofted sclated house. But as for the Ravenswoods, I hae seen three generations of them, and de'il ane to mend other."

"I thought they had enjoyed a fair character in the country," said their descendant.

"Character! Ou ye see, sir," said the sexton, "as for the auld gude-sire body of a lord, I lived on his land when I was a swanking young chield, and could hae blawn the trumpet wi' ony body, for I had wind eneugh then—and touching this trumpeter Marine that I have heard play afore the Lords of the Circuit, I wad hae made nae mair o' him than of a bairn and a bawbee whistle—I defy him to hae play'd 'Boot and saddle,' or 'Horse and away,' or 'Gallants, come trot,' with me—he has na the tones."

"But what is all this to old Lord Ravenswood, my friend?" said the Master, who,

with an anxiety not unnatural in his circumstances, was desirous of prosecuting the musician's first topic—" What had his memory to do with the degeneracy of the trumpet music?"

" Just this, sir," answered the sexton, " that I lost my wind in his service. Ye see I was trumpeter at the castle, and had allowance for blawing at break of day, and at dinner-time, and other whiles when there was company about, and it pleased my lord; and when he raised his militia to caper awa' to Bothwell Brigg against the wrang-headed wastland whigs, I behoved, reason or nane, to munt a horse and caper awa wi' them."

" And very reasonable, " said Ravenswood; " you were his servant and vassal."

" Servitor, say ye?" replied the sexton, " and so I was—but it was to blaw folk to their warm dinner, or at the warst to a decent kirk-yard, and no to skirl them awa' to a bluidy brae side, where there was de'il a bed-

ral but the hooded craw. But bide ye—ye shall hear what cam o't, and how far I am bund to be bedesman to the Ravenswoods.—Till't, ye see, we gae'd on a braw simmer morning, twenty-fourth of June, saxteen hundred and se'enty-nine, of a' the days of the month and year,—drums beat—guns rattled—horses kicked and trampled. Hackstoun of Rathillet keepit the brigg wi' musket and carabine and pike, sword and scythe for what I ken, and we horsemen were ordered down to cross at the ford,—I hate fords at a' times, let abe when there's thousands of armed men on the other side. There was auld Ravenswood brandishing his Andrew Ferrara at the head, and crying to us to come and buckle to, as if we had been gaun to a fair,—there was Caleb Balderstone, that is living yet, flourishing in the rear, and swearing Gog and Magog, he would put steel through the guts of ony man that turned bridle,—there was young Allan Ravenswood, that was then Master, wi' a bended pistol in his hand,—it was a mercy it gaed

na aff,—crying to me, that had scarce as much wind left as serve the necessary purpose of my ain lungs, "Sound, you poltroon! sound, you damned cowardly villain, or I will blow your brains out!" and, to be sure, I blew sic points of war, that the scraugh of a clockin-hen was music to them."

"Well, sir, cut all this short," said Ravenswood.

"Short!—I had been like to be cut short mysell, in the flower of my youth, as scripture says; and that's the very thing that I compleen o'.—Weel! in to the water we behoved a' to splash, heels ower head, sit or fa'—ae horse driving on anither, as is the way of brute beasts, and riders that hae as little sense,—the very bushes on the ither side were ableeze, wi' the flashes of the whig guns; and my horse had just taen the grund, when a blackavised westland carle—I wad mind the face o' him a hundred years yet,—an ee like a wild falcon's, and a beard as broad as my shovel, clapped the end o' his lang black gun with-

in a quarters length of my lug!—by the grace of Mercy, the horse swarved round, and I fell aff at the tae side as the ball whistled bye at the tither, and the fell auld lord took the whig such a swauk wi' his broadsword that he made twa pieces o' his head, and down fell the lurdane wi' a' his bowk abune me."

"You were rather obliged to the old lord, I think," said Ravenswood.

"Was I? my sartie! first for bringing me into jeopardy, would I nould I—and then for whomling a chield on the tap of me, that dang the very wind out of my body—I hae been short-breathed ever since, and canna gang twenty yards without peghing like a miller's aiver."

"You lost then your place as trumpeter," said Ravenswood."

"Lost it—to be sure I lo st it," replied the sexton, "for I couldna have plaid pew upon a dry humlock;—but I might hae dune weel eneugh, for I keepit the wage and the free house, and little to do but

play on the fiddle to them, but for this Allan Lord Ravenswood, that's far waur than ever his father was."

"What," said the Master, "did my father—I mean did his father's son—this last Lord Ravenswood, deprive you of what the bounty of his father allowed you?"

"Ay, troth did he," answered the old man; "for he loot his affairs gang to the dogs, and let in this Sir William Ashton on us, that will gi'e naething for naething, and just removed me and a' the puir creatures that had bite and soup at the castle, and a hole to put our heads in, when things were in the auld way."

"If Lord Ravenswood protected his people, my friend, while he had the means of doing so, I think they might spare his memory," replied Ravenswood.

"Ye are welcome to your ain opinion, sir," said the sexton; "but ye winna persuade me that he did his duty, either to himsel or to huz poor dependent creatures, in guiding us the gate he has done—he

might hae gi'en us life rent tacks of our bits o' houses and yards—and me, that's an auld man, living in yon miserable cabin, that's fitter for the dead than the quick, and killed wi' rheumatise, and John Smith in my dainty bit mailing, and his window glazen, and a' because Ravenswood guided his gear like a fule."

"It is but too true," said Ravenswood, conscience-struck; "the penalties of extravagance extend far beyond the prodigal's own sufferings."

"However," said the sexton, "this young man Edgar is like to avenge my wrangs on the haill of his kindred."

"Indeed," said Ravenswood; "why should you suppose so?"

"They say he is about to marry the daughter of Leddy Ashton; and let her leddyship get his head ance under her oxter, and see you if she winna gi'e his neck a thraw. Sorra a bit if I were him—Let her alane for hauding a' thing in het water that draws near her—sae the warst wish I

shall wish the lad is, that he may take his ain creditable gate o't, and ally himsel wi' his father's enemies, that have taken his broad lands and my bonnie kail-yard from the lawful owners thereof."

Cervantes acutely remarks, that flattery is pleasing even from the mouth of a madman; and censure, as well as praise, often affects us, while we despise the opinions and motives on which it is founded and expressed. Ravenswood, abruptly reiterating his command that Alice's funeral should be attended to, flung away from the sexton, under the painful impression that the great, as well as the small vulgar, would think of his engagement with Lucy like this ignorant and selfish peasant.

"And I have stooped to subject myself to these calumnies, and am rejected notwithstanding. Lucy, your faith must be true and perfect as the diamond, to compensate for the dishonour which men's opinions, and the conduct of your mother, attach to the heir of Ravenswood."

As he raised his eyes, he beheld the Marquis of A——, who, having arrived at the Tod's-hole, had walked forth to look for his kinsman.

After mutual greetings, he made some apology to the Master for not coming forward on the preceding evening. "It was his wish," he said, "to have done so, but he had come to the knowledge of some matters which induced him to delay his purpose. I find," he said, "there has been a love affair here, kinsman; and though I might blame you for not having communicated with me, as being in some degree the chief of your family"——

"With your lordship's permission," said Ravenswood, "I am deeply grateful for the interest you are pleased to take in me —but *I* am the chief and head of my family."

"I know it—I know it," said the Marquis; "in a strict heraldic and genealogical sense, you certainly are so—what I

mean is, that being in some measure under my guardianship"——

"I must take the liberty to say, my lord," answered Ravenswood—and the tone in which he interrupted the Marquis boded no long duration to the friendship of the noble relatives, when he himself was fortunately interrupted by the little sexton, who came puffing after them, to ask if their honours would chuse music at the change-house to make up for short cheer.

"We want no music," said the Master, abruptly.

"Your honour disna ken what ye're refusing, then," said the fiddler, with the impertinent freedom of his profession. "I can play, 'Will't thou do't again,' and 'the Auld Man's Mear's Dead,' sax times better than ever Pattie Birnie. I'll get my fiddle in the turning of a coffin-screw."

"Take yourself away, sir," said the Marquis.

"And if your honour be a north-country gentleman," said the persevering min-

strel, " whilk I wad judge from your tongue, I can play, ' Lingeram Cosh,' and ' Mullin Dhu,' and ' the Cummers of Athole.' "

" Take yourself away, friend; you interrupt our conversation."

" Or if, under your honour's favour, ye should happen to be a thought honest, I can play, (this in a low and confidential tone,) ' Killiecrankie,' and ' the King shall hae his ain,' and ' the Auld Stuarts back again,'—and the wife at the change-house is a decent discreet body, neither kens nor cares what toasts are drunken, and what tunes are played in her house—she's deaf to a' thing but the clink o' the siller."

The Marquis, who was sometimes suspected of jacobitism, could not help laughing as he threw the fellow a dollar, and bid him go play to the servants if he had a mind, and leave them at peace.

" Aweel, gentlemen," said he, " I am wishing your honours gude day—I'll be a' the better of the dollar, and ye'll be the

waur of wanting the music, I'se tell ye—But I'se gang hame, and finish the grave in the tuning o' a fiddle-string, and then get my bread-winner, and awa' to your folk, and see if they hae better lugs than their masters."

CHAPTER XI.

True love, an' thou be true,
Thou has ane kittle part to play;
For fortune, fashion, fancy, and thou,
Maun strive for many a day.

I've kenn'd by mony a friend's tale,
Far better by this heart of mine,
What time and change of fancy avail
A true love-knot to untwine.

HENDERSOUN.

"I WISHED to tell you, my good kinsman," said the Marquis, "now that we are quit of this impertinent fiddler, that I had tried to discuss this love affair of yours with Sir William Ashton's daughter. I never saw the young lady, but for a few minutes to-day; so, being a stranger to her personal merits, I pay a compliment to you, and offer her no offence, in saying you might do better."

"My lord, I am much indebted for the interest you have taken in my affairs," said Ravenswood. "I did not intend to have troubled you in any matter concerning Miss Ashton. As my engagement with that young lady has reached your lordship, I can only say, that you must necessarily suppose that I was aware of the objections to my marrying into her father's family, and of course must have been completely satisfied with the reasons by which these objections are over-balanced, since I have proceeded so far in the matter."

"Nay, Master, if you had heard me out," said his noble relation, "you might have spared that observation; for, without questioning that you had reasons which seemed to you to counterbalance every other obstacle, I set myself, by every means that it became me to use towards the Ashtons, to persuade them to meet your views."

"I am obliged to your lordship for your unsolicited intercession," said Ravenswood, "especially as I am sure your lordship would

never carry it beyond the bounds which it became me to use."

"Of that," said the Marquis, "you may be confident; I myself felt the delicacy of the matter too much to place a gentleman nearly connected with my house in a degrading or dubious situation with these Ashtons. But I pointed out all the advantages of their marrying their daughter into a house so honourable, and so nearly related with the first in Scotland; I explained the exact degree of relationship in which the Ravenswoods stand to ourselves; and I even hinted how political matters were like to turn, and what cards would be trumps next parliament. I said I regarded you as a son—or a nephew, or so—rather than as a more distant relation; and that I made your affair entirely my own."

"And what was the issue of your lordship's explanation?" said Ravenswood, in some doubt whether he should resent or express gratitude for his interference.

"Why, the Lord Keeper would have

listened to reason," said the Marquis; "he is rather unwilling to leave his place, which, in the present view of a change, must vaik; and, to say truth, he seemed to have a liking for you, and to be sensible of the general advantages to be attained by such a match. But his lady, who is tongue of the trump, Master,"——

"What of Lady Ashton, my lord?" said Ravenswood; "let me know the issue of this extraordinary conference—I can bear it."

"I am glad of that, kinsman," said the Marquis, "for I am ashamed to tell you half what she said. It is enough—her mind is made up—and the mistress of a first-rate boarding-school could not have rejected with more haughty indifference the suit of a half-pay Irish officer, beseeching permission to wait upon the heiress of a West India planter, than Lady Ashton spurned every proposal of mediation which it could at all become me to offer in behalf of you,

my good kinsman. I cannot guess what she means. A more honourable connection she could not form, that's certain. As for money and land, that used to be her husband's business rather than her's; I really think she hates you for having the birth that her husband wants, and perhaps for wanting the lands that her goodman has. But I should only vex you to say more about it—here we are at the change-house."

The Master of Ravenswood paused as he entered the cottage, which reeked through all its crevices, and they were not few, from the exertions of the Marquis's travelling-cooks to supply good cheer, and spread, as it were, a table in the wilderness.

"My Lord Marquis," said Ravenswood, "I already mentioned that accident has put your lordship in possession of a secret, which, with my consent, should have remained one even to you, my kinsman, for some time. Since the secret was to part

from my own custody, and that of the only person besides who was interested in it, I am not sorry it should have reached your lordship's ears, as being fully aware that you are my noble kinsman and friend."

"You may believe it is safely lodged with me, Master of Ravenswood," said the Marquis; "but I should like well to hear you say, that you renounced the idea of an alliance, which you can hardly pursue without a certain degree of degradation."

"Of that, my lord, I shall judge," answered Ravenswood—"and I hope with delicacy as sensitive as any of my friends. But I have no engagement with Sir William and Lady Ashton. It is with Miss Ashton alone that I have entered upon the subject, and my conduct in the matter shall be entirely ruled by her's. If she continues to prefer me in my poverty to the wealthier suitors whom her friends recommend, I may well make some sacrifice to her sincere affection—I may well surrender

to her the less tangible and less palpable advantage of birth, and the deep-rooted prejudices of family hatred. If Miss Lucy Ashton should change her mind on a subject of such delicacy, I trust my friends will be silent on my disappointment, and I shall know how to make my enemies so."

"Spoke like a gallant young nobleman," said the Marquis; "for my part I have that regard for you, that I should be sorry the thing went on. This Sir William Ashton was a pretty enough petty-fogging kind of a lawyer twenty years ago, and betwixt battling at the bar, and leading in committees of Parliament, he has got well on—the Darien matter lent him a lift, for he had good intelligence and sound views, and sold out in time—but the best work is had out of him. No Scotch government will take him at his own, or rather his wife's extravagant valuation; and betwixt his indecision and her insolence, from all I can guess, he will outsit his market, and be had

cheap when no one will bid for him. I say nothing of Miss Ashton; but I assure you, a connection with her father will be neither useful nor ornamental, beyond that part of your father's spoils which he may be prevailed upon to disgorge by way of tocher-good —and take my word for it, you will get more if you have spirit to bell the cat with him in the Scots Parliament.—And I will be the man, cousin," continued his lordship, "will course the fox for you, and make him rue the day that ever he refused a composition too honourable for him, and proposed by me on the behalf of a kinsman."

There was something in all this that, as it were, overshot the mark. Ravenswood could not disguise from himself that his noble kinsman had more reasons for taking offence at the reception of his suit, than regarded his interest and honour, yet he could neither complain nor be surprised that it should be so. He contented himself therefore with repeating, that his attachment was to Miss Ashton personally; that he de-

sired neither wealth nor aggrandizement from her father's means and influence, and that nothing should prevent his keeping his engagement, excepting her own express desire that it should be relinquished—and he requested as a favour that the matter might be no more mentioned betwixt them at present, assuring the Marquis of A—— that he should be his confident in its progress or its interruption.

The Marquis soon had more agreeable, as well as more interesting subjects on which to converse. A foot-post, who had followed him from Edinburgh to Ravenswood Castle, and had traced his steps to the Tod's-hole, brought them a packet laded with good news. The political calculations of the Marquis had proved just, both in London and at Edinburgh, and he saw almost within his grasp, the pre-eminence for which he had panted.—The refreshments which the servants had prepared were now put on the table, and an epicure would perhaps have enjoyed them with ad-

ditional zest, from the contrast which such fare afforded to the miserable cabin in which it was served up.

The turn of conversation corresponded with and added to the social feelings of the company. The Marquis expanded with pleasure on the power which probable incidents were like to assign to him, and on the use which he hoped to make of it in serving his kinsman Ravenswood. Ravenswood could but repeat the gratitude which he really felt, even when he considered the topic as too long dwelt upon. The wine was excellent, notwithstanding its having been brought in a runlet from Edinburgh; and the habits of the Marquis, when engaged with such good cheer, were somewhat sedentary. And so it fell out that they delayed their journey two hours later than was their original purpose.

"But what of that, my good young friend?" said the Marquis; "your castle of Wolf's Crag is but at five or six miles distance, and will afford the same hospitality

to your kinsman of A——, that it gave to this same Sir William Ashton."

"Sir William took the castle by storm," said Ravenswood, "and, like many a victor, had little reason to congratulate himself on his conquest."

"Well, well!" said Lord A——, whose dignity was something relaxed by the wine he had drunk,—"I see I must bribe you to harbour me—come, pledge me in a bumper health to the last young lady that slept at Wolf's Crag, and liked her quarters.—My bones are not so tender as hers, and I am resolved to occupy her apartment to-night, that I may judge how hard the couch is that love can soften."

"Your lordship may chuse what penance you please," said Ravenswood; "but I assure you, I should expect my old servant to hang himself, or throw himself from the battlements, should your lordship visit him so unexpectedly—I do assure you, we are totally and literally unprovided."

But his declaration only brought from his

noble patron an assurance of his own total indifference as to every species of accommodation, and his determination to see the tower of Wolf's Crag. His ancestor, he said, had been feasted there, when he went forward with the then Lord Ravenswood to the fatal battle of Flodden, in which they both fell. Thus hard pressed, the Master offered to ride forward to get matters put in such preparation, as time and circumstances admitted; but the Marquis protested, his kinsman must afford him his company, and would only consent that an avant-courier should carry to the destined Seneschal, Caleb Balderstone, the unexpected news of this invasion.

The Master of Ravenswood soon after accompanied the Marquis in his carriage, as the latter had proposed; and when they became better acquainted in the progress of the journey, his noble relation explained the very liberal views which he entertained for his relation's preferment, in case of the success of his own political schemes. They re-

lated to a secret, and highly important commission beyond sea, which could only be entrusted to a person of rank, talent, and perfect confidence, and which, as it required great trust and reliance on the envoy employed, could not but prove both honourable and advantageous to him. We need not enter into the nature and purpose of this commission, farther than to acquaint our readers that the charge was in prospect highly acceptable to the Master of Ravenswood, who hailed with pleasure the hope of emerging from his present state of indigence and inaction, into independence and honourable exertion.

While he listened thus eagerly to the details with which the Marquis now thought it necessary to entrust him, the messenger who had been dispatched to the Tower of Wolf's Crag, returned with Caleb Balderstone's humble duty, and an assurance, that "a' should be in seemly order, sic as the hurry of time permitted, to receive their lordships as it behoved."

Ravenswood was too well accustomed to his Seneschal's mode of acting and speaking, to hope much from this confident assurance. He knew that Caleb acted upon the principle of the Spanish generals, in the campaign of ——, who, much to the perplexity of the Prince of Orange, their commander in chief, used to report their troops as full in number, and possessed of all necessary points of equipment, not considering it consistent with their dignity, or the honour of Spain, to confess any deficiency either in men or munition, until the want of both was unavoidably discovered in the day of battle. Accordingly, Ravenswood thought it necessary to give the Marquis some hint, that the fair assurance which they had just received from Caleb, did not by any means ensure them against a very indifferent reception.

"You do yourself injustice, Master," said the Marquis, "or you wish to surprise me agreeably. From this window I see a great light in the direction where, if I remember aright, Wolf's Crag lies; and, to judge from

the splendour which the old tower sheds around it, the preparations for our reception must be of no ordinary description. I remember your father putting the same deception on me, when we went to the tower for a few days hawking, about twenty years since, and yet we spent our time as jollily at Wolf's Crag as we could have done at my own hunting seat at B——."

"Your lordship, I fear, will experience that the faculty of the present proprietor to entertain his friends is greatly abridged," said Ravenswood; "the will, I need hardly say, remains the same. But I am as much at a loss as your lordship to account for so strong and brilliant a light as is now above Wolf's Crag,—the windows of the tower are few and narrow, and those of the lower story are hidden from us by the walls of the court.—I cannot conceive that any illumination of an ordinary nature could afford such a blaze of light."

The mystery was soon explained; for the cavalcade almost instantly halted, and the voice of Caleb Balderstone was heard at

the coach window, exclaiming, in accents broken by grief and fear, "Och, gentlemen—Och, my gude lords—Och, haud to the right!—Wolf's Crag is burning, bower and ha'—a' the rich plenishing outside and inside—a' the fine graith, pictures, tapestries, needle-work, hangings, and other decorements,—a' in a bleeze, as if they were nae mair than sae mony peats, or as muckle pease strae. Haud to the right, gentlemen, I implore ye—there is some sma' provision making at Lucky Sma'trash's—but O, wae for this night, and wae for me that lives to see it!"——

Ravenswood was at first stunned by this new and unexpected calamity; but after a moment's recollection, he sprang from the carriage, and hastily bidding his noble kinsman good night, was about to ascend the hill towards the castle, the broad and full conflagration of which now flung forth a high column of red light, that flickered far to seaward upon the dashing waves of the ocean.

"Take a horse, Master," exclaimed the Marquis, greatly affected by this additional misfortune, so unexpectedly heaped upon his young protegé; "and give me my ambling palfrey, and haste forward, you knaves, to see what can be done to save the furniture, or to extinguish the fire—ride, you knaves, for your lives."

The attendants bustled together, and began to strike their horses with the spur, and call upon Caleb to shew them the road. But the voice of that careful Seneschal was heard above the tumult, "O stop—sirs, stop—turn bridle, for the luve of mercy—add not loss of lives to loss of warld's gear. —Thirty barrels of powther landed out of a Dunkirk dogger in the auld Lord's time —a' in the vau'ts of the auld tower,—the fire canna be far aff it, I trow—Lord's sake, to the right, lads—to the right—lets pit the hill atween us and peril,—a wap wi' a corner-stane o' Wolf's Crag wad defy the doctor."

It will readily be supposed that this an-

nunciation hurried the Marquis and his attendants into the route which Caleb prescribed, dragging Ravenswood along with them, although there was much in the matter which he could not possibly comprehend. "Gun-powder!" he exclaimed, laying hold of Caleb, who in vain endeavoured to escape from him, "what gun-powder? How any quantity of powder could be in Wolf's Crag without my knowledge, I cannot possibly comprehend."

"But I can," interrupted the Marquis, whispering him, "I can comprehend it thoroughly—for God's sake, ask him no more questions at present."

"There it is now," said Caleb, extricating himself from his master, and adjusting his dress, "your honour will believe his lordship's honourable testimony—His lordship minds weel, how, in the year that him they ca'd King Willie died"——

"Hush! hush, my good friend!" said the Marquis; "I shall satisfy your master upon that subject."

"And the people at Wolf's hope—" said Ravenswood, "did none of them come to your assistance before the flame got so high?"

"Aye did they, mony ane of them, the rapscallions," said Caleb; "but truly I was in nae hurry to let them into the tower, where there were so much plate and valuables."

"Confound you for an impudent liar,' said Ravenswood; "there was not a single ounce of"——

"Forbye," said the Butler, most irreverently raising his voice to a pitch which drowned his master's, "the fire made fast on us, owing to the store of tapestry and carved timmer in the banqueting ha', and the loons ran like scauded rats so soon as they heard of the gunpouther."

"I do entreat," said the Marquis to Ravenswood, "you will ask him no more questions."

"Only one, my lord—What has become of poor Mysie?"

"Mysie?" said Caleb—"I had nae time to look about ony Mysie—she's in the tower, I'se warrant, biding her awful doom."

"By heaven!" said Ravenswood, "I do not understand all this—the life of a faithful old creature is at stake—my lord, I will be withheld no longer—I will at least ride up, and see whether the danger is as imminent as this old fool pretends."

"Weel, then, as I live by bread," said Caleb, "Mysie is weel and safe. I saw her out of the castle before I left it mysell—Was I ganging to forget an auld fellow-servant?"

"What made you tell me the contrary this moment?" said his master.

"Did I say otherwise?" answered Caleb; "then I maun hae been dreaming surely, or this awsome night has turned my judgment—but safe she is, and ne'er a living soul in the castle, a' the better for them—they wad have gotten an unco heezy."

The Master of Ravenswood, upon this assurance being solemnly reiterated, and

notwithstanding his extreme wish to witness the last explosion, which was to ruin to the ground the mansion of his fathers, suffered himself to be dragged onward towards the village of Wolf's-hope, where not only the change-house, but that of our own well-known friend the cooper, were all prepared for reception of himself and his noble guest, with a liberality of provision which requires some explanation.

We omitted to mention in its place, that Lockhard having fished out the truth concerning the mode by which Caleb had obtained the supplies for his banquet, the Lord Keeper, amused with the incident, and desirous at the time to gratify Ravenswood, had recommended the cooper of Wolf's-hope to the official situation under government, the prospect of which had reconciled him to the loss of his wild-fowl. Mr Girder's preferment had occasioned a pleasing surprise to old Caleb; for when, some days after his master's departure, he found himself absolutely compelled, by some

necessary business, to visit the fishing hamlet, and was gliding like a ghost past the door of the cooper, for fear of being summoned to give some account of the progress of the solicitation in his favour, or, more probably, that the inmates might upbraid him with the false hope he had held out upon the subject, he heard himself, not without some apprehension, summoned at once in treble, tenor, and bass,—a trio performed by the voices of Mrs Girder, old Dame Loup-the-dike, and the goodman of the dwelling—"Mr Caleb—Mr Caleb—Mr Caleb Balderstone! I hope ye arena ganging dry-lipped by our door, and we sae muckle indebted to you?"

This might be said ironically as well as in earnest. Caleb augured the worst, turned a deaf ear to the trio aforesaid, and was moving doggedly on, his ancient castor pulled over his brows, and his eyes bent on the ground, as if to count the flinty pebbles with which the rude pathway was causewayed. But on a sudden he found

himself surrounded in his progress, like a stately merchantman in the Gut of Gibraltar, (I hope the ladies will excuse the tarpaulin phrase,) by three Algerine gallies.

"Gude guide us, Mr Balderstone!" said Mrs Girder.

"Wha wad hae thought it of an auld and kenn'd friend!" said the mother.

"No sae muckle as stay to receive our thanks," said the cooper himself, "and frae the like o' me that seldom offer them. I am sure I hope there's nae ill seed sawn between us, Mr Balderstone—Ony man that has said to ye, I am no gratefu' for the situation of Queen's cooper, let me hae a whample at him wi' mine eatche*—that's a'."

"My good friends—my dear friends," said Caleb, still doubting how the certainty of the matter might stand, "what needs a' this ceremony?—ane tries to serve their friends, and sometimes they may happen to prosper, and sometimes to misgi'e—nae-

* *Anglice*, adze.

thing I care to be fashed wi' less than thanks —I never could bide them."

"Faith, Mr Balderstone, ye suld hae been fashed wi' few o' mine," said the downright man of staves and hoops, "if I had only your gude-will to thank ye for—I suld e'en hae set the guse, and the wild-deukes, and the runlet of sack, to balance that account. Gude-will, man, is a geizen'd tub, that hauds in nae liquor—but gude deed's like the cask, tight, round, and sound, that will haud liquor for the king."

"Have ye no heard of our letter," said the mother-in-law, "making John the Queen's cooper for certain?—and scarce a chield that had ever hammered gird upon tub but was applying for it?"

"Have I heard!!!" said Caleb, (who now found how the wind set,) with an accent of strong contempt at the doubt expressed—"Have I heard, quo' she!!!"—and as he spoke, he changed his shambling, skulking, dodging pace, into a manly and authoritative step, re-adjusted his cocked hat, and

suffered his brow to emerge from under it in all the pride of aristocracy, like the sun from behind a cloud.

"To be sure, he canna but hae heard," said the good woman.

"Ay, to be sure it's impossible but I should," said Caleb; "and sae I'll be the first to kiss ye, joe, and wish you, cooper, much joy of your preferment, naething doubting but ye ken wha are your friends, and have helped ye, and can help ye. I thought it right to look a wee strange upon it at first," added Caleb, "just to see if ye were made of the right mettle—but ye ring true, lad, ye ring true."

So saying, with a most lordly air he kissed the women, and abandoned his hand, with an air of serene patronage, to the hearty shake of Mr Girder's horn-hard palm. Upon this complete, and to Caleb most satisfactory information, he did not, it may readily be believed, hesitate to accept an invitation to a solemn feast, to which were invited, not only all the *nota-*

bles of the village, but even his ancient antagonist, Mr Dingwall himself. At this festivity he was, of course, the most welcome and most honoured guest; and so well did he ply the company with stories of what he could do with his master, his master with the Lord Keeper, the Lord Keeper with the Council, and the Council with the King, that before the company dismissed, (which was, indeed, rather at an early hour than a late one,) every man of note in the village was ascending to the top-gallant of some ideal preferment by the ladder of ropes which Caleb had presented to their imagination. Nay, the cunning Butler regained in that moment, not only all the influence he possessed formerly over the villagers, when the baronial family which he served were at the proudest, but acquired even an accession of importance. The writer—the very attorney himself—such is the thirst of preferment—felt the force of the attraction, and taking an opportunity to draw Caleb into a corner, spoke, with

affectionate regret, of the declining health of the sheriff-clerk of the county.

"An excellent man—a most valuable man, Mr Caleb—but fat sall I say!—we are peer feckless bodies—here the day, and awa' by cock-screech the morn—and if he failzies, there maun be somebody in his place—and gif that ye could airt it my way, I suld be thankful, man—a gluve stuffed wi' gowd nobles—an' hark ye, man, something canny till yoursell—and the Wolf's-hope carles to settle kindly wi' the Master of Ravenswood—that is, Lord Ravenswood—God bless his lordship."

A smile, and a hearty squeeze by the hand, was the suitable answer to this overture, and Caleb made his escape from the jovial party, in order to avoid committing himself by any special promises.

"The Lord be gude to me," said Caleb, when he found himself in the open air, and at liberty to give vent to the self-exultation with which he was, as it were, distended; "did ever ony man see sic a set of

green-gaislings!—the very pick-maws and solan-geese out by yonder at the Bass hae ten times their sense—God, an' I had been the Lord High Commissioner to the Estates o' Parliament, they couldna hae beflumm'd me mair—and, to speak Heaven's truth, I could hardly hae beflumm'd them better neither. But the writer—ha! ha! ha!—mercy on me, that I suld live in my auld days to gi'e the gang-bye to the very writer! Sheriff-clerk!!!—But I hae an auld account to settle wi' the carle; and to make amends for bye-ganes, the office shall just cost him as much time-serving and tide-serving, as if he were to get it in gude earnest—of whilk there is sma' appearance, unless the Master learns mair the ways of this warld, whilk it is muckle to be doubted that he never will."

CHAPTER XII.

Why flames yon far summit—why shoot to the blast
Those embers, like stars from the firmament cast?—
'Tis the fire-shower of ruin, all dreadfully driven
From thine eyrie, that beacons the darkness of Heaven.

CAMPBELL.

THE circumstances announced in the conclusion of the last chapter, will account for the ready and cheerful reception of the Marquis of A—— and the Master of Ravenswood in the village of Wolf's-hope. In fact, Caleb had no sooner announced the conflagration of the tower, than the whole hamlet were upon foot to hasten to extinguish the flames. And although that zealous adherent diverted their zeal by intimating the formidable contents of the subterranean apartments, yet the check only turned their assiduity into another direction. Never

had there been such slaughtering of capons, and fat geese, and barn-door fowls,—never such boiling of *reested* hams,—never such making of car-cakes and sweet scones, Selkirk bannocks, cookies, and petticoat-tails, delicacies little known to the present generation. Never had there been such a tapping of barrels, and such uncorking of grey-beards, in the village of Wolf's-hope. All the inferior houses were thrown open for the reception of the Marquis's dependants, who came, it was thought, as precursors of the shower of preferment, which hereafter was to leave the rest of Scotland dry, in order to distil its rich dews on the village of Wolf's-hope under Lammermoor. The minister put in his claim to have the guests of distinction lodged at the Manse, having his eye, it was thought, upon a neighbouring preferment, where the incumbent was sickly; but Mr Balderstone destined that honour to the cooper, his wife, and wife's mother, who danced for joy at the preference thus assigned them.

Many a beck and many a bow welcomed these noble guests to as good entertainment as persons of such a rank could set before such visitors; and the old dame, who had formerly lived in Ravenswood Castle, and knew, as she said, the ways of the nobility, was no ways wanting in arranging matters, as well as circumstances permitted, according to the etiquette of the times. The cooper's house was so roomy, that each guest had his separate retiring room, to which they were ushered with all due ceremony, while the plentiful supper was in the act of being placed upon the table.

Ravenswood no sooner found himself alone, than, impelled by a thousand feelings, he left the apartment, the house, and the village, and hastily retraced his steps to the brow of the hill, which rose betwixt the village, and screened it from the tower, in order to view the final fall of the house of his fathers. Some idle boys from the hamlet had taken the same direction out of curiosity, having first witnessed the ar-

rival of the coach-and-six and its attendants. As they ran one by one past the Master, calling to each other to "come and see the auld tower blaw up in the lift like the peelings of an ingan," he could not but feel himself moved with indignation. "And these are the sons of my father's vassals," he said—"of men bound, both by law and gratitude, to follow our steps through battle, and fire, and flood; and now the destruction of their liege-lord's house is but a holiday's sight to them!"

These exasperating reflections were partly expressed in the acrimony with which he exclaimed, on feeling himself pulled by the cloak,—"What do ye want, ye dog?"

"I am a dog, and an auld dog too," answered Caleb, for it was he who had taken the freedom,—"and I am like to get a dog's wages—but it does not signification a pinch of sneeshing, for I am ower auld a dog to learn new tricks, or to follow a new master."

As he spoke, Ravenswood attained the ridge of the hill from which Wolf's Crag was visible; the flames had entirely sunk down, and to his great surprise, there was only a dusky reddening upon the clouds immediately over the castle, which seemed the reflection of the embers of the sunken fire.

"The place cannot have blown up," said the Master; "we must have heard the report—if a quarter of the gunpowder was there you tell me of, it would have been heard twenty miles off."

"It's very like it wad," said Balderstone, composedly.

"Then the fire cannot have reached the vaults——"

"It's like no," answered Caleb, with the same impenetrable gravity.

"Hark ye, Caleb," said his master, "this grows a little too much for my patience. I must go and examine how matters stand at Wolf's Crag myself."

"Your honour is ganging to gang nae sic gate," said Caleb, firmly.

"And why not?" said Ravenswood, sharply; "who or what shall prevent me?"

"Even I mysel," said Caleb, with the same determination.

"You, Balderstone!" replied the Master, "you are forgetting yourself, I think."

"But I think no," said Balderstone; "for I can just tell you a' about the castle on this know-head as weel as if you were at it. Only dinna pit yoursel into a kippage, and expose yoursel before the weans, or before the Marquis, when ye gang down bye."

"Speak out, you old fool," replied his master, "and let me know the best and the worst at once."

"Ou, the best and warst is just that the tower is standing hail and fear, as safe and as empty as when ye left it."

"Indeed!—and the fire?" said Ravenswood.

"Not a gleed of fire, then, except the

bit kindling peat, and maybe a spunk in Mysie's cutty-pipe," replied Caleb.

"But the flame?" demanded Ravenswood; "the broad blaze which might have been seen ten miles off—what occasioned that?"

"Hout awa! it's an auld saying and a true,—

> Little's the light
> Will be seen far in a mirk night.

A wheen fern and horse litter that I fired in the court-yard, after sending back the loun of a footman; and, to speak Heaven's truth, the next time that ye send or bring ony body here, let them be gentles allenarly, without ony fremd servants, like that chield Lockhard, to be gledging and gleeing about, and looking upon the wrang side of ane's housekeeping, to the discredit of the family, and forcing ane to damn their souls wi' telling ae lee after another faster than I can count them—I wad rather

set fire to the tower in gude earnest, and burn it ower my ain head into the bargain, or I see the family dishonoured in the sort."

"Upon my word, I am infinitely obliged by the proposal, Caleb," said his master, scarce able to restrain his laughter, though rather angry at the same time. "But the gunpowder?—is there such a thing in the tower?—the Marquis seemed to know of it."

"The pouther—ha! ha! ha!—the Marquis—ha! ha! ha!" replied Caleb; "if your honour were to brain me, I behooved to laugh—the Marquis—the pouther—was it there? ay, it was there. Did he ken o't?—my certie! the Marquis kenn'd o't, and it was the best of the game; for, when I couldna pacify your honour wi' a' that I could say, I aye threw out a word mair about the gunpouther, and garr'd the Marquis tak the job in his ain hand."

"But you have not answered my question," said the Master impatiently; "how

came the powder there, and where is it now?"

"Ou, it came there, an ye maun needs ken," said Caleb, looking mysteriously, and whispering, "when there was like to be a wee bit rising here; and the Marquis, and a' the great lords of the north, were a' in it, and mony a gudely gun and broadsword were ferried ower frae Dunkirk forbye the pouther—awfu' wark we had getting them into the tower under cloud o' night, for ye maun think it wasna every body could be trusted wi' sae kittle jobs—But if ye will gae hame to your supper, I will tell you a' about it as ye gang down."

"And these wretched boys," said Ravenswood, "is it your pleasure they are to sit there all night, to wait for the blowing up of a tower that is not even on fire?"

"Surely not, if it is your honour's pleasure that they suld gang hame; although," added Caleb, "it wadna do them a grain's damage—they wad screigh less the next

day, and sleep the sounder at e'en—But just as your honour likes."

Stepping accordingly towards the urchins who manned the knolls near which they stood, Caleb informed them, in an authoritative tone, that their Honours Lord Ravenswood and the Marquis of A—— had given orders that the tower was not to blow up till next day at noon. The boys dispersed upon this comfortable assurance. One or two, however, followed Caleb for more information, particularly the urchin whom he had cheated while officiating as turnspit, who screamed, "Mr Balderstone! Mr Balderstone! than the castle's gane out like an auld wife's spunk!"

"To be sure it is, callant," said the Butler; "do ye think the castle of as great a lord as Lord Ravenswood wad continue in a bleeze, and him standing looking on wi' his ain very een?—It's aye right," continued Caleb, shaking off his ragged page, and closing in to his master, "to train up weans, as the wise man says, in the way

they should go, and aboon a' to teach them respect to their superiors."

"But all this while, Caleb, you have never told me what became of the arms and powder," said Ravenswood.

"Why, as for the arms," said Caleb, "it was just like the bairns' rhyme—

> 'Some gaed east, and some gaed west,
> And some gaed to the craw's nest;'

And for the pouther, I e'en changed it, as occasion served, with the skippers o' Dutch luggers and French vessels, for gin and brandy, and it served the house mony a year—a gude swap too, between what cheereth the soul of man and that which dingeth it clean out of the body; forbye, I keepit a wheen pounds of it for yoursell when ye wanted to take the pleasure o' shooting—whiles, in these latter days, I wad hardly hae kenn'd else whar to get pouther for your pleasure. And now that your anger is ower, sir, wasna that weel managed o' me, and arena ye far better sorted doun yonder

than ye could hae been in your ain auld ruins up bye yonder, as the case stands wi' us now ?—the mair's the pity."

"I believe you may be right, Caleb; but, before burning down my castle, either in jest or in earnest," said Ravenswood, "I I think I had a right to be in the secret."

"Fie for shame, your honour!" replied Caleb; "it fits an auld carle like me weel eneugh to tell lees for the credit of the family, but it wadna beseem the like o' your honour's sell; besides, young folk are no judicious—they cannot make the maist of a bit figment. Now this fire—for a fire it sall be, if I suld burn the auld stable to make it mair feasible—this fire, besides that it will be an excuse for asking ony thing we want through the country, or doun at the haven—this fire will settle mony things on an honourable footing for the family's credit, that cost me telling twenty daily lees to a wheen idle chaps and queans, and, what's waur, without gaining credence."

"That was hard indeed, Caleb; but I

do not see how this fire should help your veracity or your credit."

"There it is now," said Caleb; "wasna I saying that young folk had a green judgement?—How suld it help me, quotha?—it will be a creditable apology for the honour of the family for this score of years to come, if it is weel guided. Where's the family pictures? says ae meddling body—the great fire at Wolf's Crag, answers I. Where's the family plate? says another—the great fire, says I; wha was to think of plate when life and limb were in danger?—Where's the wardrobe and the linens?—where's the tapestries and the decorements?—beds of state, twilts, pands and testors, napery and broidered work?—The fire—the fire—the fire. Guide the fire weel, and it will serve ye for a' that ye suld have and have not—and, in some sort, a gude excuse is better than the things themselves; for they maun crack and wear out, and be consumed by time, whereas a gude offcome, prudently and creditably handled, may serve a nobleman and his family, Lord kens how lang!"

Ravenswood was too well acquainted with his Butler's pertinacity and self-opinion, to dispute the point with him any further. Leaving Caleb, therefore, to the enjoyment of his own successful ingenuity, he returned to the hamlet, where he found the Marquis and the good women of the mansion under some anxiety—the former on account of his absence, the others for the discredit their cookery might sustain by the delay of the supper. All were now at ease, and heard with pleasure that the fire at the castle had burned out of itself without reaching the vaults, which was the only information that Ravenswood thought it proper to give in public concerning the event of his Butler's stratagem.

They sat down to an excellent supper. No invitation could prevail on Mr and Mrs Girder, even in their own house, to sit down at table with guests of such high quality. They remained standing in the apartment, and acted the part of respectful and careful attendants on the company. Such

were the manners of the time. The elder dame, confident through her age and connection with the Ravenswood family, was less scrupulously ceremonious. She played a mixed part betwixt that of the hostess of an inn, and the mistress of a private house, who receives guests above her own degree. She recommended, and even pressed what she thought best, and was herself easily entreated to take a moderate share of the good cheer, in order to encourage her guests by her own example. Often she interrupted herself, to express her regret that "my Lord did not eat—that the Master was pyking a bare bane—that, to be sure, there was naething there fit to set before their honours—that Lord Allan, rest his saul, used to like a pouthered guse, and said it was Latin for a tass o' brandy—that the brandy came frae France direct; for, for a' the English laws and gaugers, the Wolf's-hope brigs hadna forgotten the gate to Dunkirk."

Here the cooper admonished his mother-

in-law with his elbow, which procured him the following special notice in the progress of her speech.

"Ye needna be dunshin that gate, John," continued the old lady; "naebody says that *ye* ken whar the brandy comes from; and it wadna be fitting ye should, and you the queen's cooper; and what signifies't," continued she, addressing Lord Ravenswood, "to king, queen, or keiser, whar an auld wife like me buys her pickle sneeshin, or her drap brandy-wine, to haud her heart up?"

Having thus extricated herself from her supposed false step, Dame Loup-the-dyke proceeded, during the rest of the evening, to supply, with great animation, and very little assistance from her guests, the funds necessary for the support of the conversation, until, declining any further circulation of their glass, her guests requested her permission to retire to their apartments.

The Marquis occupied the chamber of dais, which, in every house above the rank

of a mere cottage, was kept sacred for such high occasions as the present. The modern finishing with plaister was then unknown, and tapestry was confined to the houses of the nobility and superior gentry. The cooper, therefore, who was a man of some vanity, as well as some wealth, had imitated the fashion observed by the inferior landholders and clergy, who usually garnished their state apartments with hangings of a sort of stamped leather, manufactured in the Netherlands, garnished with trees and animals executed in copper foil, and with many a pithy sentence of morality, which, although couched in Low Dutch, were perhaps as much attended to in practice as if written in broad Scotch. The whole had somewhat of a gloomy aspect; but the fire, composed of old pitch-barrel staves, blazed merrily up the chimney; the bed was decorated with linen of most fresh and dazzling whiteness, which had never before been used, and might, perhaps, have never been used at all, but for this high occasion.

On the toilette beside, stood an old-fashioned mirror, in a fillagree frame, part of the dispersed finery of the neighbouring castle. It was flanked by a long-necked bottle of Florence wine, by which stood a glass nearly as tall, resembling in shape that which Teniers usually places in the hands of his own portrait, when he paints himself as mingling in the revels of a country village. To counterbalance those foreign centinels, there mounted guard on the other side of the mirror two stout warders of Scottish lineage; a jug, namely, of double ale, which held a Scotch pint, and a quegh or bicker of ivory and ebony, hooped with silver, the work of John Girder's own hands, and the pride of his heart. Besides these preparations against thirst, there was a goodly diet-loaf, or sweet cake; so that, with such auxiliaries, the apartment seemed victualled against a siege of two or three days.

It only remains to say, that the Marquis's valet was in attendance, displaying his mas-

ter's brocaded night gown, and richly embroidered velvet cap, lined and faced with Brussels lace, upon a huge leathern easy chair, wheeled round so as to have the full advantage of the comfortable fire which we have already mentioned. We therefore commit that eminent person to his night's repose, trusting he profited by the ample preparations made for his accommodation,—preparations which we have mentioned in detail, as illustrative of ancient Scottish manners.

It is not necessary we should be equally minute in describing the sleeping apartment of the Master of Ravenswood, which was that usually occupied by the goodman and goodwife themselves. It was comfortably hung with a sort of warm-coloured worsted, manufactured in Scotland, approaching in texture to what is now called shaloon. A staring picture of John Girder himself ornamented this dormitory, painted by a starving Frenchman, who had, God knows how or why, strolled over from Flushing

or Dunkirk to Wolf's-hope in a smuggling dogger. The features were, indeed, those of the stubborn, opinionative, yet sensible artizan, but Monsieur had contrived to throw a French grace into the look and manner, so utterly inconsistent with the dogged gravity of the original, that it was impossible to look at it without laughing. John and his family, however, piqued themselves not a little upon this picture, and were proportionably censured by the neighbourhood, who pronounced that the cooper, in sitting for the same, and yet more in presuming to hang it up in his bed-chamber, had exceeded his privilege as the richest man of the village; at once stept beyond the bounds of his own rank, and encroached upon those of the superior orders; and, in fine, had been guilty of a very over-weening act of vanity and presumption. Respect for the memory of my deceased friend, Mr Richard Tinto, has obliged me to treat this matter at some length; but I spare the reader his prolix, though curious observa-

tions, as well upon the character of the French school, as upon the state of painting in Scotland, at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The other preparations of the Master's sleeping apartment, were similar to those in the chamber of dais.

At the usual early hour of that period, the Marquis of A—— and his kinsman prepared to resume their journey. This could not be done without an ample breakfast, in which cold meat and hot meat, and oatmeal flummery, wine and spirits, and milk varied by every possible mode of preparation, evinced the same desire to do honour to their guests, which had been shewn by the hospitable owners of the mansion upon the evening before. All the bustle of preparation for departure now resounded through Wolf's-hope. There was paying of bills and shaking of hands, and saddling of horses, and harnessing of carriages, and distributing of drink-money. The Marquis left a broad piece for the gratification of John Girder's

household, which he, the said John, was for some time disposed to convert to his own use; Dingwall the writer assuring him he was justified in so doing, seeing he was the disburser of those expences which were the occasion of the gratification. But, notwithstanding this legal authority, John could not find in his heart to dim the splendour of his late hospitality, by pocketting any thing in the nature of a gratuity. He only assured his menials he would consider them as a damned ungrateful pack, if they bought a gill of brandy elsewhere than out of his own stores; and as the drink-money was likely to go to its legitimate use, he comforted himself that, in this manner, the Marquis's donative would, without any impeachment of credit and character, come ultimately into his own exclusive possession.

While arrangements were making for departure, Ravenswood made blythe the heart of his ancient butler, by informing him, cautiously however, for he knew Ca-

leb's warmth of imagination, of the probable change which was about to take place in his fortunes. He deposited with Balderstone, at the same time, the greater part of his slender funds, with an assurance which he was obliged to reiterate more than once, that he himself had sufficient supplies in certain prospect. He, therefore, enjoined Caleb, as he valued his favour, to desist from all further manœuvres against the inhabitants of Wolf's-hope, their cellars, poultry, yards, and substance whatsoever. In this prohibition, the old domestic acquiesced more readily than his master expected.

"It was doubtless," he said, "a shame, a discredit, and a sin, to harry the puir creatures, when the family were in circumstances to live honourably on their ain means; and there might be wisdom," he said, "in giving them a whiles breathing time, at any rate, that they might be the more readily brought forwards upon his honour's future occasions."

This matter being settled, and having

taken an affectionate farewell of his old domestic, the Master rejoined his noble relative, who was now ready to enter his carriage. The two landladies, old and young, in all kindly greeting, stood simpering at the door of their house, as the coach and six, followed by its train of clattering horsemen, thundered out of the village. John Girder also stood upon his threshold, now looking at his honoured right hand, which had been so lately shaken by a marquis and a lord, and now giving a glance into the interior of his mansion, which manifested all the disarray of the late revel, as if balancing the distinction which he had attained with the expences of the entertainment.

At length he opened his oracular jaws. "Let every man and woman here set about their ain business, as if there was nae sic thing as marquis or master, duke or drake, laird or lord, in this world. Let the house be redd up, the broken meat set bye, and if there is ony thing totally uneatable, let it be gien to the puir folk; and gudemother

and wife, I hae just ae thing to entreat ye, that ye will never speak to me a single word, good or bad, anent a' this nonsense wark, but keep a' your cracks about it to yoursells and your kimmers, for my head is weel nigh dung donnart wi' it already."

As John's authority was tolerably absolute, all departed to their usual occupations, leaving him to build castles in the air, if he had a mind, upon the court-favour which he had acquired by the expenditure of his worldly substance.

CHAPTER XIII.

Why, now I have Dame Fortune by the forelock,
And if she scapes my grasp, the fault is mine;
He that hath buffetted with stern adversity,
Best knows to shape his course to favouring breezes.

Old Play.

Our travellers reached Edinburgh without any farther adventure, and the Master of Ravenswood, as had been previously settled, took up his abode with his noble friend.

In the mean time, the political crisis which had been expected, took place, and the Tory party obtained, in the Scottish councils of Queen Anne, a short-lived ascendency, of which it is not our business to trace either the cause or consequences. Suffice it to say, that it affected the different political parties according to the na-

ture of their principles. In England, many of the High Church party, with Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford, at their head, affected to separate their principles from those of the Jacobites, and, on that account, obtained the denomination of Whimsicals. The Scottish High Church party, on the contrary, or, as they termed themselves, the Cavaliers, were more consistent, if not so prudent, in their politics, and viewed all the changes now made, as preparatory to calling to the throne, upon the queen's demise, her brother, the Chevalier St George. Those who had suffered in his service, now entertained the most unreasonable hopes, not only of indemnification, but of vengeance upon their political adversaries, while families attached to the Whig interest, saw nothing before them but a renewal of the hardships they had undergone during the reigns of Charles the Second and his brother, and a retaliation of the confiscations which had been inflicted upon the Jacobites during that of King William.

But the most alarmed at the change of system, was that prudential set of persons, some of whom are found in all governments, but who abound in a provincial administration like that of Scotland during the period, and who are what Cromwell called waiters upon providence, or, in other words, uniform adherents to the party who are uppermost. Many of these hastened to read their recantation to the Marquis of A——; and, as it was easily seen, that he took a deep interest in the affairs of his kinsman, the Master of Ravenswood, they were the first to suggest measures for retrieving at least a part of his property, and for restoring him in blood against his father's attainder.

Old Lord Turntippet professed to be one of the most anxious for the success of these measures; for "it grieved him to the very saul," he said, "to see so brave a young gentleman, of sic auld and undoubted nobility, and, what was mair th n a' that, a bluid relation of the Marquis of A——, the man whom," he swore, "he

honoured most upon the face of the yearth, brought to so severe a pass. For his ain puir peculiar," as he said, "and to contribute something to the rehabitation of sae auld ane house," the said Turntippet sent in three family pictures lacking the frames, and six high-backed chairs, with worked Turkey cushions, having the crest of Ravenswood broidered thereon, without charging a penny either of the principal or interest they had cost him, when he bought them, sixteen years before, at a roup of the furniture of Lord Ravenswood's lodgings in the Canongate.

Much more to Lord Turntippet's dismay than to his surprise, although he affected to feel more of the latter than the former, the Marquis received his gift very drily, and observed, that his lordship's restitution, if he expected it to be received by the Master of Ravenswood and his friends, must comprehend a pretty large farm, which having been mortgaged to Turntippet for a very inade-

quate sum, he had contrived, during the confusion of the family affairs, and by means well understood by the lawyers of that period, to acquire to himself in absolute property.

The old time-serving lord winced excessively under this requisition, protesting to God, that he saw no occasion the lad could have for the instant possession of the land, seeing he would doubtless now recover the bulk of his estate from Sir William Ashton, to which he was ready to contribute by every means in his power, as was just and reasonable; and finally declaring, that he was willing to settle the land on the young gentleman, after his own natural demise.

But all these excuses availed nothing, and he was compelled to disgorge the property, on receiving back the sum for which it had been mortgaged. Having no other means of making peace with the higher powers, he returned home sorrowful and malcontent, complaining to his confidants,

"that every mutation or change in the state had hitherto been productive of some sma' advantage to him in his ain quiet affairs; but that the present had (pize upon it!) cost him one of the best pen-feathers o' his wing."

Similar measures were threatened against others, who had profited by the wreck of the fortune of Ravenswood; and Sir William Ashton, in particular, was menaced with a parliamentary reversal of the judicial sentences under which he held the Castle and Barony of Ravenswood. With him, however, the Master, as well for Lucy's sake as on account of the hospitality he had received from him, felt himself under the necessity of proceeding with great candour. He wrote to the late Lord Keeper, for he no longer held that office, stating frankly the engagement which existed between him and Miss Ashton, requesting his permission for their union, and assuring him of his willingness to put the settlement of all

matters between them upon such a footing, as Sir William himself should think favourable.

The same messenger was charged with a letter to Lady Ashton, deprecating any cause of displeasure which the Master might unintentionally have given her, enlarging upon his attachment to Miss Ashton, and the length to which it had proceeded, and conjuring the lady, as a Douglas in nature as well as in name, generously to forget ancient prejudices and misunderstandings; and to believe that the family had acquired a friend, and she herself a respectful and attached humble servant, in him who subscribed himself Edgar, Master of Ravenswood.

A third letter Ravenswood addressed to Lucy, and the messenger was instructed to find some secret and secure means of delivering it into her own hands. It contained the strongest protestations of continued affection, and dwelt upon the approaching change of the writer's fortunes

as chiefly valuable, by tending to remove the impediments to their union. He related the steps he had taken to overcome the prejudices of her parents, and especially of her mother, and expressed his hope they might prove effectual. If not, he still trusted that his absence from Scotland upon an important and honourable mission might give time for prejudices to die away; while he hoped and trusted Miss Ashton's constancy, on which he had the most implicit reliance, would baffle any effort that might be used to divert her attachment. Much more there was, which, however interesting to the lovers themselves, would afford the reader neither interest nor information. To each of these three letters the Master of Ravenswood received an answer, but by different means of conveyance, and certainly couched in very different styles.

Lady Ashton answered his letter by his own messenger, who was not allowed to remain at Ravenswood a moment longer than she was engaged in penning these

lines. "For the hand of Mr Ravenswood of Wolf's Crag, these:

"SIR UNKNOWN,

"I have received a letter, signed Edgar, Master of Ravenswood, concerning the writer whereof I am uncertain, seeing that the honours of such a family were forfeited for high treason in the person of Allan, late Lord Ravenswood. Sir, if you shall happen to be the person so subscribing yourself, you will please to know, that I claim the full interest of a parent in Miss Lucy Ashton, which I have disposed of irrevocably in behalf of a worthy person. And, sir, were this otherwise, I would not listen to a proposal from you, or any of your house, seeing their hand has been uniformly held up against the freedom of the subject, and the immunities of God's kirk. Sir, it is not a flightering blink of prosperity which can change my constant opinion in this regard, seeing it has been my lot before now, like holy David, to see the wicked great in power,

and flourishing like a green bay tree; nevertheless I passed, and they were not, and the place thereof knew them no more. Wishing you to lay these things to your heart for your own sake, so far as they may concern you, I pray you to take no farther notice of her, who desires to remain your unknown servant,

"MARGARET DOUGLAS,
"otherwise ASHTON."

About two days after he had received this very unsatisfactory epistle, the Master of Ravenswood, while walking up the High-street of Edinburgh, was jostled by a person, in whom, as the man pulled off his hat to make an apology, he recognized Lockhard, the confidential domestic of Sir William Ashton. The man bowed, slipt a letter into his hand, and disappeared. The packet contained four close-written folios, from which, however, as is sometimes incident to the compositions of great lawyers, little could be extracted, excepting that

the writer felt himself in a very puzzling predicament.

Sir William spoke at length of his high value and regard for his dear young friend, the Master of Ravenswood, and of his very extreme high value and regard for the Marquis of A——, his very dear old friend ;—he trusted that any measures that they might adopt, in which he was concerned, would be carried on with due regard to the sanctity of decreets, and judgments obtained *in foro contentioso;* protesting, before men and angels, that if the law of Scotland, as declared in her established courts, were to undergo a reversal in any popular assembly, the evils which would thence arise to the public, would inflict a greater wound upon his heart, than any loss he might himself sustain by such irregular proceedings. He flourished much on generosity and forgiveness of mutual injuries, and hinted at the mutability of human affairs, always favourite topics with the weaker party in politics.

He pathetically lamented, and gently censured, the haste which had been used in depriving him of his situation of Lord Keeper, which his experience had enabled him to fill with some advantage to the public, without so much as giving him an opportunity of explaining how far his own views of general politics might essentially differ from those now in power. He was convinced the Marquis of A—— had as sincere intentions towards the public, as himself or any man; and if, upon a conference, they could have agreed upon the measures by which it was to be pursued, his experience and his interest should have gone to support the present administration. Upon the engagement betwixt Ravenswood and his daughter, he spoke in a dry and confused manner. He regretted so premature a step as the engagement of the young people should have been taken, and conjured the Master to remember he had never given any encouragement thereunto; and observed, that, as a transaction *inter minores*,

and without concurrence of his daughter's natural curators, the engagement was inept, and void in law. This precipitate measure, he added, had produced a very bad effect upon Lady Ashton's mind, which it was impossible at present to remove. Her son, Colonel Douglas Ashton, had embraced her prejudices in their fullest extent, and it was impossible for Sir William to adopt a course disagreeable to them, without a fatal and irreconcileable breach in his family; which was not at present to be thought of. Time, the great physician, he hoped would mend all.

In a postscript, Sir William said something more explicitly, that rather than the law of Scotland should sustain a severe wound through his sides, by a parliamentary reversal of the judgment of her supreme courts, in the case of the Barony of Ravenswood, he himself would extrajudicially consent to considerable sacrifices.

From Lucy Ashton, by some unknown

conveyance, the Master received the following lines :—" I received your's, but it was at the utmost risk ; do not attempt to write again till better times. I am sore beset, but I will be true to my word, while the exercise of my reason is vouchsafed to me. That you are happy and prosperous is some consolation, and my situation requires it all." The note was signed L. A.

This letter filled Ravenswood with the most lively alarm. He made many attempts, notwithstanding her prohibition, to convey letters to Miss Ashton, and even to obtain an interview ; but his attempts were frustrated, and he had only the mortification to learn that anxious and effectual precautions had been taken to prevent the possibility of their correspondence. The Master was more distressed by these circumstances, as it became impossible to delay his departure from Scotland, upon the important mission which had been confided to him. Before his departure, he put Sir William Ashton's letter into the hands

of the Marquis of A——, who observed with a smile, that Sir William's day of grace was past, and that he had now to learn which side of the hedge the sun had got to. It was with the greatest difficulty that Ravenswood extorted from the Marquis a promise, that he would compromise the proceedings in parliament, providing Sir William should be disposed to acquiesce in a union between him and Lucy Ashton.

"I would hardly," said the Marquis, "consent to your throwing away your birth-right in this manner, were I not perfectly confident that Lady Ashton, or Lady Douglas, or whatever she calls herself, will, as Scotchmen say, keep her threep; and that her husband dares not contradict her."

"But yet," said the Master, "I trust your Grace will consider my engagement as sacred."

"Believe my word of honour," said the Marquis, "I would be a friend even to your follies; and having thus told you *my*

opinion, I will endeavour, as occasion offers, to serve you according to your own."

The Master of Ravenswood could but thank his generous kinsman and patron, and leave him full power to act in all his affairs. He departed from Scotland upon his mission, which, it was supposed, might detain him upon the continent for some months.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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